

Division of Academics – Budget Summary

Overview of the Division

The purpose of the Division of Academics is to ensure that each child graduates or receives a certificate of program completion and is ready for post-secondary education, career, and life. The Division of Academics is organized into two departments:

- **Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment** – Provides curriculum, materials of instruction, professional learning, and support to schools, students, and families to ensure high-quality learning occurs for all students each day.
- **Department of Special Education** – Provides learners with disabilities, birth to age 21, high-quality services within their homes, community, and/or school settings to improve outcomes for learners who receive early intervention and special education services.

The overarching Division budgets include the following programs:

- Chief Academic Officer
- Academic Support for Schools

The Division of Academics inspires students, staff, and the community through an instructional program that is rigorous, globally relevant, and engaging for each learner.

The Division of Academics staff design programs, professional learning, community engagement, and curriculum that works to ensure every student receives a solid education through access to high-quality first instruction, appropriate interventions, individualized instruction, differentiated supports, and access to flexible learning opportunities. Division staff provide support to school staff, students, and families so that all students experience authentic learning, including equitable opportunities to earn college credit or industry certification, to prepare students for future careers and life. Additional focus is also placed on students' social emotional learning and mental health while working to mitigate gaps in academic learning. Family and community partnerships are uplifted to maximize opportunities for learners, birth to 21.

The Division of Academics advances this budget to increase and plan for resource alignments to further address student needs in the areas of early childhood development, reading, mathematics, language development, and special education. Increases to the Division budgets primarily reflect equity-based decision making necessary for serving more students experiencing learning challenges.

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Summary of Major Budget Changes for FY 2026

The budget for the Division of Academics is decreasing by a total of (\$2.6) million or (21.9) percent compared to the current budget. This total change in budget is for budget additions and budget realignments. The amount of change for each is:

- Budget additions equal \$334,509 a 2.86 percent increase.
- Budget realignments equal (\$2.9) million and the realignment of (28.0) FTE positions.

More specific information on these budget changes is explained below which are followed by schedules summarizing the Division budget and changes by program.

Budget changes are grouped as Mandates, Commitments, Priorities and Realignments.

- Mandates are budget changes necessary to meet a specific legal requirement. The mandated cost changes in this year's budget support the continued implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
- Commitments are changes made in the budget to support the costs for existing obligations such as contracts and prior negotiated pay and benefits.
- Priorities represent those budget items to support existing policy, Superintendent or Board defined goals and objectives, and specific issues.
- Realignments represent transfer of funds between programs, state categories and/or spend categories to support existing requirements. Realignments are budget neutral, although there can be significant changes between programs and accounts. The FY 2026 budget includes a significant movement of budget authority for budgetary realignments that have been done for three purposes:
 - Realignments to meet Blueprint Minimum School Fund reporting requirements. For FY 2026, employee benefits (Social Security, Medicare, pension, and health insurance) have been realigned from the Fixed Charges budget (Program 8001) into each program budget. As a result, all program budgets with positions will show a significant increase in budget reflecting the cost of the employee benefits in the program.
 - Realignments for the Superintendent's reorganization of divisions and programs done in July 2025.
 - Realignments of existing budget authority to meet budgetary needs and properly classify expenditures by state category, division, program, and/or account.

Budget additions for Mandates, Commitments, Priorities, and Realignments are sub-grouped for clearer understanding of the reason(s) for the budget changes in the division and programs. Each division summary section provides a narrative explanation of budget changes and schedules that present the changes in budget dollars and full-time equivalent (FTE) positions from the current budget. The Factors Influencing and Summary of the Budget in the Executive Summary section of the budget book provides the combined summary of budget changes for all divisions and by state category.

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A summary of budget changes for this division is provided below.

Commitments

- \$69,117 – Health Insurance cost increases based on preliminary actuarial estimates.
- (\$18,834) – Estimated change in retirement costs for positions included in this division.
- (\$24,814) – Year-over-Year Personnel Cost Change. This adjustment will appear in all program budgets that have budgeted personnel. A complete explanation for these changes is included in the Factors Influencing in the Executive Summary section of the budget book.

Priorities

- \$309,040 – Placeholder for employee compensation increases subject to collective bargaining.

Realignments

- (\$4,446,738) – Realignment of (29.0) FTE positions and associated salaries, wages, and non-personnel funding for FY 2025 reorganization.
- \$1,463,380 – Realignment of Employee Health Insurance, Social Security, Medicare, and Retirement from Fixed Charges to the programs in the Academics Division.
- \$97,419 – Realignment of 1.0 FTE , salaries and wages, and non-personnel funding to meet budget needs.

Summary schedules of these changes are presented in the following pages.

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SUMMARY OF FY 2026 REQUESTED BUDGET										
Program	Program Number	Approved Budget FY 2025	Total Additions	Total Realignments	Net Budget Changes	Net Budget Changes FTE	Superintendent Proposed FY 2026	Board Requested FY 2026	\$ Change From FY 2025	% Change from FY 2025
Chief Academic Officer	0304	\$ 9,431,355	\$ 334,509	\$ (2,395,663)	\$ (2,061,154)	(28.00)	\$ 7,317,425	7,370,201	\$ (2,061,154)	-21.85%
Academic Support for Schools	3202	2,247,072	-	(490,276)	(490,276)	-	1,756,796	1,756,796	(490,276)	-21.82%
Academics Total		\$ 11,678,427	\$ 334,509	\$ (2,885,939)	\$ (2,551,430)	(28.00)	\$ 9,074,221	\$ 9,126,997	\$ (2,551,430)	-21.85%

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SUMMARY OF FY 2026 BUDGET CHANGES BY PROGRAM AND SUMMARY GROUPINGS						
		0304	3202			
		Chief Academic Officer	Academic Support for Schools	FTE	Total	Total FTE
PROGRAMS						
COMMITMENTS	Health Insurance	\$ 69,117	\$ -	-	\$ 69,117	-
	Retirement	(18,834)	-	-	(18,834)	-
	Year over Year Personnel Cost Change	(24,814)	-	-	(24,814)	-
	Subtotal Commitments	25,469	-	-	25,469	-
PRIORITIES						
Subtotal Priorities	Employee Compensation	309,040	-	-	309,040	-
		309,040	-	-	309,040	-
SUBTOTAL BUDGET ADDITIONS		334,509	-	-	334,509	-
Budget Realignments		(2,395,663)	(28.00)	(490,276)	(2,885,939)	(28.00)
	DIVISION TOTAL	\$ (2,061,154)	(28.00)	\$ (490,276)	\$ (2,551,430)	(28.00)