

Student Union

Add \$1.7 Million to School Budgets After COVID, Says Report

By VOA Student Union
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School districts may need to spend an estimated \$1,778,139 above their budgets to safely reopen because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new report says.

“Costs will vary by district depending on many factors,” writes the [Association of School Business Officials International](#), along with [ASSA](#), the School Superintendents Association.

Those costs will be affected by regional and market prices for goods and services. Larger districts may have access to lower unit costs because they can buy in higher volumes. Labor costs will include the availability of staff and goods necessary to comply with recommended social distancing and cleaning protocols, the report states.

And the association sees a 25% increase in transportation capacity to adhere to social distancing guidelines.

Nearly 70% of the extra costs — \$1,232,000 — is estimated to be spent on hiring staff to implement health and safety protocols, such as additional custodial staff for increased cleaning or disinfecting of schools and buses to prevent spread. The report assumes at least one nurse and one aide per bus to screen student temperatures before boarding.



Mr. Gwala, headmaster of the Ithute Higher Primary School, poses for a portrait in an empty classroom in Alexandra, Johannesburg, on June 1, 2020.

Almost \$117,000 would go for adhering to health monitoring and cleaning or disinfecting protocols and providing personal protective equipment (gloves and daily masks) would cost \$195,000. Finally, transportation and child care would take a little more than \$235,000, the association reports.

This includes hand sanitizers, fog machines and cleaner for buses and before/after school child care programs.

The nearly \$1.8 million calculation was based on an average school district that houses 3,659 students, eight school buildings, 183 classrooms, 329 staff members, and 40 school buses.

The report highlights that it “illustrates how the overall cost of school operations will substantially increase to safely reopen” and the list of expenses is not intended to be exhaustive.”

Sarmat Misikov contributed to this report.

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