



School Budget Assumptions Review Kit

A practical companion for K-12 business managers and their department partners.

Before the next meeting, find out what moved.

An estimate can stay in a spreadsheet long after its supporting information changes. Use this kit to connect an assumption to its evidence, the person who can verify it, and the decision it could affect.

START WITH ONE ESTIMATE

Choose an assumption that is uncertain, has changed, or affects a near-term decision. Bring the current budget version and the underlying source. You do not need to review every line at once.

01 See a worked example

Page 2 follows an enrollment change through supplies, staffing, and transportation.

02 Choose the right questions

Page 3 offers six school-specific review areas and sources to check.

03 Record the change, then assign the follow-up

Use page 4 for one assumption. Page 5 guides a 15-minute team check-in.

Keep the status clear

Supported: evidence supports this estimate as of the review date. **Provisional:** some inputs remain uncertain. **Awaiting evidence:** a source or confirmation is still missing. None of these labels means a budget change has been approved.

Use alongside your district's financial model, approval process, and professional guidance. This kit does not authorize spending or staffing changes.



Worked example: enrollment changes

Fictional training example. All counts, rates, dates, and roles below are illustrative.

THE ORIGINAL ASSUMPTION

Planning count: 500 elementary students. Classroom consumable supplies: \$40 per student, giving a \$20,000 planning allowance. Source: planning roster dated September 1.

NEW INFORMATION

An October 10 roster lists 525 students: 25 more than the planning count. Status: provisional until the registrar checks withdrawals, duplicates, and the distribution by school and grade.

Work through the effect - do not apply one percentage to every cost.

Supplies

25 additional students x \$40 = \$1,000 potential increase. The scenario becomes \$21,000. Check usable inventory and committed orders before proposing a change.

Staffing

Ask which schools and grades changed. Review class distribution, service needs, staffing allocations, and applicable district requirements. A 5% count increase does not automatically mean 5% more staff.

Transportation

Ask where students live and whether existing routes have capacity. Obtain route-specific information; do not assume costs rise by \$40 per student or by the enrollment percentage.

OWNER, TRIGGER, AND NEXT ACTION

Business manager coordinates; registrar validates the roster by October 16. Revisit sooner if the roster changes. Department leads assess capacity; authorized leaders decide whether any budget amendment is needed.



Six assumptions worth checking

Choose the areas relevant to your district. Suggested owners are starting points, not fixed roles.

1 Enrollment and program mix

Check the latest count by school, grade, and program against the budget version.

Registrar / student services: reconcile roster changes before the next staffing or materials decision.

2 Vacancies, compensation, and benefits

Check funded positions, expected start dates, salary assumptions, and current benefit rates.

HR / payroll: revisit after a hire, vacancy change, or updated benefit quote; distinguish partial-year from full-year cost.

3 Utilities and building operations

Compare usage and service periods as well as rates. Check planned occupancy or operating-hour changes.

Facilities / accounts payable: investigate a new rate, unusual bill, or schedule change before carrying the estimate forward.

4 Transportation

Check route capacity, service requirements, driver coverage, and contract or fuel assumptions.

Transportation lead: revisit when routes, capacity, contract terms, or student needs change.

5 Special education services

Check aggregate service plans, staffing coverage, and current provider agreements.

Special education lead / finance: review a service or placement change privately; keep student-identifying details out of this worksheet.

6 Funding amounts and timing

Separate an expected award from an official notice; distinguish revenue estimates from cash receipt timing.

Finance / grants: verify notices, eligibility conditions, restrictions, and payment dates before updating the forecast.

For each selected area: What changed? Which source supports it? Which decision needs attention?



Working sheet: one assumption

Print one copy per assumption. Use brief notes and source references; keep detailed records in district systems.

Budget period / version: _____ Prepared by: _____

Reviewed on: _____ Budget area: _____

1. Original assumption and source

Example: 500 students; September planning roster. Include source date and budget amount if relevant.

2. New information and confidence

Record what changed, its source/date, and status: supported, provisional, or awaiting evidence.

3. Potential effect and decision affected

Show any calculation and its limits. Separate one-time, ongoing, and timing effects; unknown is acceptable.

4. Owner, next review, and earlier trigger

Name who checks the evidence, a review date, and the event that would prompt an earlier check.

5. Next action and approval route

What happens next, who is responsible, and where will an approved change be recorded?



A 15-minute assumptions check-in

Bring the current budget version, one completed working sheet, and the supporting source.

0-3 MINUTES | What changed?

State the original assumption and the new information. Identify the date and source. Keep the discussion to one or two material changes.

3-7 MINUTES | What could it affect?

Identify the decision, timing, and department affected. Separate a known effect from a scenario. Note missing evidence instead of inventing a precise amount.

7-11 MINUTES | Who will check?

Assign one coordinating owner and any department follow-up. Agree on the evidence needed, a due date, and an earlier review trigger.

11-15 MINUTES | What happens next?

Confirm the action and approval route. Name who updates the authorized model after approval, and who needs the result. Close by reading back the owner and deadline.

USE THIS CLOSING SUMMARY

"We planned on _____. The new information is _____. The potential effect is _____; we still need to verify _____. _____ will check by _____. Any proposed change goes through _____."

Follow-up: action / owner / due date / outcome

Background reading

ASBO International supports forward-looking school financial planning and clear explanations of budget changes. The example, prompts, worksheet, and meeting format in this kit are original Commerce Street Cares tools, not ASBO requirements or an endorsed product.

ASBO: Long-Term Financial Planning: Beyond Lagging Indicators (April 2025)

ASBO: Meritorious Budget Award checklist overview | Accessed October 14, 2026.