

January 12, 2016

Dear Boston Public Schools Families:

In the Boston Public Schools, we strive for the success of all youth through our values of equity, innovation, and coherence. We continue to celebrate and benefit from the public commitment to education in Boston, where we invest more per pupil than most of our large urban counterparts. Fiscal transparency is critical and in this letter we hope to share with the Boston Public School community where we stand today for the 2016-17 school year.

Continuing a multi-year trend, BPS and City of Boston have continued to see federal revenue decline and shrinking net state aid for education. Despite declining education revenue, the City has remained committed to BPS and will be increasing our budget appropriation by \$13.5 million in the current fiscal year. This represents the largest appropriation in the history of BPS.

While the city has continued to invest in the education of our youth, rising expenses are outpacing current revenue sources. The projected funding increase will not cover the full cost of our programs and services, especially given our commitment to important investments such as, early childhood education, the hiring of high-quality, diverse teachers and extended learning time. This creates a very challenging budget scenario.

Boston Public Schools is facing a nearly \$30 million structural deficit due in large part to rising fixed costs, including \$21 million in salary and benefit increases. When coupled with unforeseen costs and important investments in core operations, past commitments, and strategic priorities, the district's projected budget gap rises to \$40-50 million. As a result, the entire district is forced to make difficult choices. Adjustments were made to the Weighted Student Funding formula that resulted in schools across the system making a total of \$10-\$12 million in cuts. Please note that shifts in school enrollment and programming are also impacting individual school budgets.

Even with these changes to school budgets, and having identified \$20 million in cuts to central departments and investments, we are still left with a sizable gap to fill. We will begin public discussion of these issues in the School Committee meeting on February 3, 2016. A series of public hearings will continue during February and March, culminating with the School Committee's vote to approve a balanced budget by March 23, 2016.



School leaders have worked incredibly hard with their school communities, district staff and each other to help problem-solve and find ways to lessen the impacts these cuts will have on students.

On Monday, January 11, 2016, BPS principals and headmasters, along with members of the Central Office, met with Mayor Martin J. Walsh to discuss the impacts of our current fiscal situation and partner with him and the City to advocate for more resources.

While we know there are further efficiencies to be made, we have chosen not to close schools in this current budget. Closing schools must be a deliberate process based on equity of access and student needs. Our current work with the Facilities Master Plan is collecting data and information that will critically inform smart long-term decisions for Boston. We do not want to move forward with any dramatic changes absent that input, which includes the deep engagement of our community in the coming year.

I have asked school leaders to unite in our efforts to advocate as a community. With the help of City Hall and stakeholders, we will seek additional supports, including partnerships, grants and state funds. However, even with additional advocacy, the current financial reality is likely to remain difficult.

One of the projects in our 100-Day Plan was the launch of our Long Term Financial Planning, and this important effort is already well underway. Please stay tuned for opportunities to engage with that project this spring and summer. We will look for your help to develop the bold changes necessary to put us on a sustainable long-term trajectory in which we can support the innovation and investment we all know our students deserve.

As we head into the next school year, our schools remain strong and our commitment to excellence in teaching and learning continues. Our school staff is all committed to ensuring that students are given access to rigorous instruction that is preparing them for college and career success.

I thank BPS school leaders and families for their continued support as we work and advocate together for the best possible outcomes for our students. I have been touched by the tremendous efforts I have observed to engage in thoughtful and caring dialogue about the challenging financial situation before us.

Sincerely,



Tommy Chang, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

