

Section

9



APPENDIX E: SSC BUDGET BASICS

Boston Public Schools
School Site Council FAQs about the
Budget



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SSC BUDGET BASICS:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How is it decided how much money my school gets?

In order to insure equitable distribution of available resources to all schools, school budgets are based on applying *standard allocation criteria* to *projected enrollment*. Allocations are differentiated by level (elementary, middle high). It is important to know that your budget is a reflection of both the total number and the programmatic needs (regular education, special education, SEI) of your students. If your enrollment is projected to increase, you should anticipate a proportional increase in your budget. If your enrollment is projected to decrease, you should expect a proportional decrease in your budget.

There are three types of school budgets:

- **Traditional School Budgets:** Most schools receive an allocation of staff and dollars based on their projected enrollment. Average salaries are used in computing dollars associated with staff allocations. The dollar value of the budget is computed by adding the cost of staff, materials and supplies. In a traditional school budget, enrollment drives staffing, and staffing drives the budget.
- **Pilot School Budgets:** Pilot schools receive a per pupil allocation that is differentiated by level (elementary, middle or high school). The amount provided to Pilot Schools is consistent with the per pupil amount spent by the Boston Public Schools for all schools in the district at the same level. This amount is applied to the projected enrollment. Pilot Schools also have flexibility in purchasing back certain services from the BPS. In those cases where they choose not to, and provide the service themselves, they are able to retain the cost of those services in their budget.
- **Programmatic Budgets:** Because of the intensive nature of support services required by Alternative Education Programs and Special Schools (McKinley, Carter, Horace Mann), budgets for these programs are based on the programmatic needs of the students that attend them. EEC and ELC budgets are also based on a programmatic model specifically approved for these settings.

In all school budgets, enrollment is a primary factor in determining your budget.

Title I budgets are also based on enrollment. If **40 per cent** or more of a school's students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, as measured by applications submitted to the Department of Food and Nutrition Services, they receive a Title I allocation. Elementary and Middle schools will receive \$472 per pupil, and High Schools will receive \$191 per pupil. This amount is multiplied by the per cent of free and reduced eligible students times the total number of students projected to be enrolled in your school next year.

2. Does a school have to spend its money in the same way it was distributed?

No, each school is allocated a budget based on standard, enrollment-driven criteria to insure that all schools receive an equitable amount of resources. Schools, through their School Site Councils, can choose to reallocate those dollars in ways that best meet the needs of the school. Having said that, each school must also meet specific requirements of federal and state laws, local ordinances, School Committee policy and collective bargaining agreements.

3. Where does the money come from?

Money to support education in the Boston Public Schools comes from a variety of sources: local, state, federal and private. This money is maintained in specific funds.

General Fund: The general fund represents the appropriation that is received from the City. It was supported by two main sources of funds: local property taxes and state local aid (Chapter 70 funds). After adjusting for charter schools, Chapter 70 local aid is added to the general fund appropriation. Other City revenues, primarily property taxes, are also added to the appropriation.

The general fund budget is the budget that is approved by the School Committee, City Council and Mayor. It supports the general operations of the school district, and makes up most of your school budget. It represents about 86% of all public funds available to the school district.

The Boston Public Schools budget represents approximately 35% of the total City budget.

Special Revenue Funds: These funds are commonly known as federal and state grants. The annual budget receives revenue in federal and state grants. The largest grants are Title I, Food Services and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. In FY2008, about 85% of grants came from the federal government and 15% from the state. In total, Special Revenue funds represent about 14% of all public funds that come into the district for non-capital purpose. There are three types of grants.

- **Entitlement or Categorical Grants:** These grants come to the BPS based on specific formulas established through legislation and/or regulation by the federal and state governments. They are directed at specific target populations based on specific indicators (poverty, disability, performance, etc.). They include the so-called No Child Left Behind grants from the federal government (Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV and Title V). They also include state grants earmarked for specific targeted populations or services such as the Academic Support Grant.
- **Competitive Grants:** These grants are the result of submitting successful applications to either the state or federal government, and are typically awarded for support in achieving very specific goals. Examples of competitive

grants include the National Science Foundation Grant, Safe Schools/Healthy Schools, and Reading First.

- **Reimbursement Grants:** These grants represent reimbursement for services that the Boston Public Schools provides. They include National School Lunch and the State's Circuit Breaker Program for extraordinary costs of special education services.

Most of the grants that come into the school district support Academic Achievement and Student Support Services.

Private Funds: The Boston Public Schools, and individual schools, are fortunate to be the recipients of generous donations from the private sector to support our work. Major support has been received from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Annenberg Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Broad Foundation, Barr Foundation, EdVestors, and many others. These funds support both district wide education reform efforts as well as individual, school-based initiatives. BPS has received approximately \$10 million a year over the past several years in private donations.

It is important to know that the BPS does not penalize schools for successful fund raising. **No deductions** are made to school budgets as an offset to private funds that schools have received.

Private funds that come to the BPS are managed by fiscal agents, and do not flow through the school district's financial systems. Organizations acting as fiscal agents include the Boston Plan for Excellence, Center for Collaborative Educations, Jobs for the Future, and the Boston Educational Development Foundation (BEDF).

4. What is my role on the School Site Council on my school budget?

The roles of the School Site Council are defined in the contract between the School Committee of the City of Boston and the Boston Teachers Union. Shared decision-making is based on a philosophy that "the school site is the appropriate place for most decision-making effecting the education of children in that school", and that "the best quality decisions are likely the result of shared decision-making."

The contract clearly defines your role, as a member of the School Site Council, with respect to the budget. It is, in consultation with the Principal/ Headmaster and other members of the Council:

"to approve the budget for discretionary school materials, supplies, textbooks and equipment, including the use of school improvement funds"

In addition, the Budget Office expects each school budget to be signed by the principal/headmaster, a parent member and teacher member of the Council. This signature does not necessarily mean that you agree with the budget, but that you have "seen and reviewed" the budget submitted.

Finally, you have an opportunity to submit written comments with the budget. These are most powerful when they are submitted by the whole Council.

It should be noted that the budget process is not disconnected from the work of the school or the Council. In its truest sense, the budget represents your financial plan to support the school's Whole School Improvement Plan.

5. What flexibility is there in the budget? What discretionary funds require School Site Council approval?

In past analyses, the BPS has estimated that 90-95% of a schools' general fund budget could be considered constrained by mandates, policies, regulations and/or requirements (perhaps more so in difficult budget years).

Potential areas of flexibility include: Staffing configurations, Administrators, Library Aides, Instructional Supplies, and Planning & Development Specialists, some clerical positions, and grant funds such as Title I. Areas of particular constraint include Special Education, and META compliance to insure appropriate services for students with limited English proficiency.

The greatest flexibilities are not granted by the district, but created at the school level by innovative scheduling, staffing and budgeting. In other words, there are many requirements which must be met but there can be some flexibility in *HOW* they are met.

6. Is it possible to have more enrichment programs?

Yes, but it depends on the priorities established at the school site and the level of discretionary resources. Your budget should reflect the planning.

7. Is it possible to reduce class size?

Yes, but it depends on the priorities established at the school site and the level of discretionary resources.

8. Can I refuse to sign-off on the budget?

Yes, but it is not advised. The intent is to reach consensus on the best use of available resources to meet the priorities of the school.

9. What will happen if I do not sign-off?

Your principal will be instructed to submit the budget without your signature, and the budget will be recognized as the formal school request.

10. Are there other ways I can influence the budget?

Yes!

SSC BUDGET BASICS

- Provide detailed written comments with the budget submission. We do look at them!
- Participate in Public Hearings: School Committee - January - March
- Attend Public Hearings: City Council - April - June
- State Budget

11. Will our budget be cut once it is submitted?

In the current economic environment it is entirely possible. However, it has been the practice for the past several years that once school budgets are released we will not go back and ask you to make reductions from those budgets, regardless of the final amount of budgetary authority available to the Boston Public Schools.

12. There is a feeling that certain schools are the “good” schools and get extra resources for books, facilities, and teachers. Is this true?

No, this is not true. The reason that we use standard criteria for the distribution of funds is to ensure that all schools receive an equitable share of available resources, based on the needs of the students that attend the school. Any exceptions to this standard are published annually as part of the BPS’ Budget Document.

The Boston Public Schools has recently been more engaged in ensuring that there is more intensive support for those schools that are considered low performing. These interventions are based on the needs of students in schools, and not on the basis of preferential treatment. This support may come in the form of additional financial resources, at the discretion of the supervising Academic Superintendent. Or, it may come as the result of specific grant applications that have been awarded. More typically, it comes in the form of intensive support from central staff.

13. What is the 1% requirement for Title I funds?

There is a requirement of both the school district and individual schools:

- **District Requirement:** 1% of total Title I budget must be spent to support parental involvement. Part of this requirement is met through district support of Family and Community Outreach Coordinators (FCOCs) and Family & Community Engagement.
- **School Requirement:** 1% of school’s allocation must be spent to support parental involvement.
- This amount does not have to come from Title I funds, so long as the dollar value of the 1% is met.