

## Why do we need to make cuts to the 2016-2017 BPS budget?

Our goal is to serve all students in the fairest way possible, so that every student is prepared for success in college and the work force. Our budget for next year will go up, but our costs would rise even more if we did not make changes, mostly because of salary increases and legal requirements for serving high-need student populations. This continues a pattern that has occurred for years. Despite increases in funding from the City, the dollars we receive from the state and federal governments remain the same or decline. We are working hard to complete our long-term financial planning, which we hope will ease this challenge in future years.

## How are decisions made?

The BPS budget process is laid out in state statute. Over the course of two months, the BPS leadership team engages in a public dialogue with the School Committee, listening to input from its members and the community. We strive for a process that embodies our values of equity and transparency in all financial matters. A line-by-line budget was first released on February 3<sup>rd</sup> and every dollar allocated to a school is tracked on a spreadsheet made available online.

Boston has been a national leader in budgeting. We give money to schools based on the students we expect they will serve, and those dollars are adjusted to reflect need, accounting for students with disabilities and English language learners, for instance.

We believe deeply that those closest to our students – principals and headmasters – should be the ones who make school-based staffing and spending decisions. Almost two thirds of the BPS budget (including benefits) is on school budgets. Our principals and headmasters lead that decision-making.

## Is BPS facing a \$50 million budget cut this year?

No. Costs were estimated to rise by \$30 million (after accounting for efficiencies that we already have in motion). The increase in City appropriations and the cost reductions presented to the school committee have resulted in a balanced budget. At the beginning of the budget process, we estimated that we would have needed a total of \$40-\$50 million in additional funding to cover both rising costs and also proposed new investments. That figure did not account for any new appropriations.

## How were the high school cuts restored?

High schools were most affected by the changes originally proposed in early February. BPS and the Mayor's Office are optimistic that state funding will be higher than we originally thought for next year. We are using that expected increased income to restore changes to high school specific funding. Our schools that serve grades K-8 were not affected in any way by the changes to high schools.

## **What's happening with Early Childhood?**

We are proud that our budget includes a major investment in new K1 seats for more students next year. We plan to invest \$3-4M and add 200-300 new seats. Early childhood education is one of the most research-proven ways to close the opportunity and achievement Gaps.

To help support a portion of this investment, we are reducing the extra money given to five schools that provide an extended day. These five schools currently receive over \$5,000 per pupil beyond what other schools receive to serve similar students. They will now receive approximately \$4,000 per pupil beyond standard funding and hours at these centers will not change. We applaud the work of these wonderful programs, and in working closely with those five school leaders, we are confident that they can continue to support their families and students. This change helps support our K1 investment, and we believe that our fundamental goal of equity is best served when the core academic offering can be provided to more students.

## **What's happening with Special Education?**

We have made a change to the formula that drives school budgets that results in \$5 million less being allocated to schools than would otherwise have been available without the change. At the same time, the district will make \$3 million in targeted investments in Special Education supports to schools to help improve the quality of service across the district. Special Education funding to schools will now reflect slight increased class sizes for students with autism and emotional impairments that still leave us with fewer students per class than the state-required levels. In most cases, this means that schools with these programs are able to offer the same services next year, but with one additional student in the classroom.

We are working closely with every school to make sure that we serve the individual needs of every child.

## **What about state funding?**

Chapter 70, the primary vehicle for funding education in Massachusetts, does not work for BPS. Despite the Commonwealth adding over \$1 billion to Chapter 70 Aid since FY07, Boston's Chapter 70 Aid is only \$3.3M higher than it was in FY07. On the other hand, Boston does benefit by additional funding of the Charter Reimbursement line, and would benefit from the proposed amendment to charter reimbursement funding included in Governor Charlie Baker's budget. We should focus our shared advocacy at the state level and urge the adoption of legislation to fully fund the Charter School reimbursement.

---

Office of Finance  
Boston Public Schools  
March 22, 2016