



Office of the Superintendent

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Dear School Committee Members,

The Fiscal Year 2023 budget for the Boston Public Schools is guided by the belief that **every child, in every classroom, in every school** deserves the same, and for some historically under-served students, even greater opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. As we strive to ensure equity of opportunity and enact anti-racist decisions, we are called upon to maintain focus on our values and how those values are demonstrated through our budgets. The budget I am proposing includes an **increase of \$40 million** from this year for a total of **\$1,334,845,508**.

As Boston Public Schools (BPS) enters the Fiscal Year 2023 budget season, we are incredibly fortunate to have the leadership of Mayor Wu and her administration. The Mayor has expressed her deep commitment to ensure our students have the teaching and support services they need to reach their full potential. I am grateful to the Mayor and her leadership team for their belief in and dedication to our students and their partnership in developing a budget that will address the immediate needs of schools, with a solid plan for long-term and sustained success for all of our students, families, and staff.

Last year, we introduced a framework anchored in three guiding principles: **Return, Recover, Reimagine**. This continues to be the lens through which we organize our support for students and schools. Our district staff and incredible leaders have worked exceedingly hard to **Return** well. We must also continue to invest in how our students and schools **Recover** strong. Academic recovery for our students - with a special focus on those who are most in need - is one of our main priorities of the FY23 budget. We will also continue to focus on social and emotional wellbeing and development, recognizing that students will need time, care, and attention in order to succeed academically. Finally, as educators we have long balanced the immediate needs of our students with a forward thinking look to a brighter future. Therefore, we will continue to adapt and evolve to ensure better outcomes for all our students. We will listen to our stakeholders and learn from this pandemic, and we will apply what's worked to our strategy and **Reimagine** new possibilities, opening up greater opportunities for our students. We can't go back to the pre-pandemic world, and with good reason: the system just didn't work for too many students.

We will make progress towards these goals with new investments from Mayor Wu and the City of Boston. We have leveraged our City's unparalleled financial support to build our "Quality Guarantee". Using a three-year, \$110M operating investment, we are working to guarantee a baseline of services across all schools through a high-quality experience



regardless of school, program, or neighborhood. This quality guarantee will grow to include Student and Family Supports, Curriculum and Academics, Facilities, and Enrichment.

Student and Family Supports: We launched our investment in student and family supports with the allocation of a full time nurse at every school in SY20. We built on this foundation in SY21 as we returned to in-person learning with the addition of Family Liaisons to cultivate trust and provide needed support to our families; and we added at least one full-time Social Worker at every school to support the social-emotional needs of students. . These investments started before the pandemic, but have only proven to be more crucial to our overall effort to **Return** strong and **Recover** well.

To add to this support team we've been building, this year, we are investing in school-based academic counselors. We are investing to support all schools Pre-K to 12 in understanding the post-pandemic profile of our learners is not limited to one grade span, but is necessary across all grades. School leaders need our ongoing support coordinating the recovery through our student support teams, our success plans, and providing for our students social emotional needs, including: individual learning plans, special education IEPs, working with Panorama to monitor and hold ourselves accountable to the success plans, and reviewing our English learner data to make sure our students are meeting their academic goals and their needs are met.

We believe that these new positions will round out the network to support principals with their school's Student Support Teams.

Curriculum and Academics: Our goal is to create high-quality, rigorous, ethnically and culturally responsive curriculum and instruction that is robust and leads to strong academic pathways. Our team's work is to reconfigure the district to unlock resources and respond to declining enrollment. This year, we have made the difficult decision to close three schools as part of the School Committee's approved plan to streamline the number of school configurations in order to reduce the number of transitions students need to make over the course of their academic careers in BPS. We have also reconfigured 15 elementary schools to add 6th grade and expanded three additional high schools to include 7th and 8th grades. This work builds on the 17 K-6 and 3 other 7-12 expansions over the last 3 years which needs to continue in future years as we progress towards our goal of one point of transition for our students.

In the meantime, we are working with school leaders during this budget season to deliver on access to **MassCore** at the secondary level and access to more physical education, art, music, and academic enrichment within student schedules. This is the work we will collaboratively engage in with school leadership teams to review each school's existing allocation and how they schedule students.

I am especially proud of this work to standardize the graduation requirements across all high schools and set the bar high to college and career readiness as we strive toward our strategic goals of accelerated learning and an equitable opportunity for all.

Facilities: Our FY23 budget will continue to invest in facilities repairs through our Operating Budget and will make critical investments in new facilities through our Capital Budget. Our quality guarantee will bring more gyms, libraries, and auditoriums where they don't already exist. Through new buildings, we add critical spaces that are missing from our existing facilities: nursing, counseling, sensory and therapeutic spaces, and outdoor learning, gardens and play spaces. We are laying the groundwork for these investments but recognize it takes multiple years and sustained focus to achieve the results our students deserve.

Extended learning and Enrichment: The final area of our quality guarantee is extended learning and enrichment. In our operating budget, we will expand access to quality library collections. As we expand our high school redesign, we will continue to invest in athletics at the elementary, middle and high school level.

Finally, I want to address the issue of enrollment. It is challenging that we continue to experience declines in enrollment across our schools. This is largely due to broader demographic trends; there are fewer students living in Boston and entering our school district as the birth rate declines and cost of living continues to rise. **Our plan is to continue to support schools through this period of instability with soft landing funding.** We know this is only a short-term solution. We need to make bigger, system-wide adjustments —and with your courageous help, we will over time. Therefore, as we did last year, we provided additional funding outside of weighted student funding to maintain programs and services to students. In FY22, total soft landings for schools was 27.4M; in FY23, we provided \$54.1M in soft landings (an increase of \$26.7M).

While the ever-evolving pandemic continues to challenge us, it has also spurred enormous creativity and innovation in the way we think about our student's needs and the way we do our work. This budget offers a unique opportunity to partner with the Mayor, City Council and this committee to make progress towards our goal of equity and excellence for all students. I look forward to working alongside you to make these goals a reality. I thank you for your partnership and your commitment.

Sincerely,



Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Superintendent