

February 12, 2024

Dear School Committee Members,

The Boston Public Schools is moving in a new direction and I am excited to share an **FY25 budget totaling \$1,526,629,446 dollars**, which was built around our students and serving their needs. We have started an equitable long term process to ensure the district provides all students with the best possible student experience while meeting their varied and unique needs. **We are doing huge and transformative work** that can feel hard and messy at times, but it's so important to pause and acknowledge the opportunity before us and the impact it will have for generations of our students.

Over the last few years, we have been fortunate that our City has been a committed partner in providing us with strong budget allocation. Once again this year, **the City is providing additional funding, specifically focused around the investments for inclusive education**. With this I am proposing an **FY25 general fund budget of \$1,526,629,446** to support the children of Boston.

This year, an added complexity to our budget is that a one-time infusion of \$400M in federal COVID relief dollars (ESSER) spent over the past 3 years is coming to an end. ESSER funding allowed BPS to maintain operations during the pandemic, protect against learning loss, and subsidize schools with declining enrollment. It also allowed BPS to make investments in our district's literacy programs, reading coaches, and many other classroom supports, many of which we are committed to continuing.

BPS – like every other large urban school district – has also seen declining enrollment over the last decade. While our enrollment decline has slowed down over the last few years, we must now take steps to ensure that instead of continuing to keep the lights on in empty classrooms, we instead focus our investments on the things that benefit our students most.

So what does this combination of major investments from the City, the ending of ESSER, and the consolidation of classrooms due to enrollment decline actually mean and look like for schools?

The short answer is: it will be different for every school. The long answer is that this is the start of a transition as we continue the work from last year. Moving ESSER classroom-based investments onto the operating budget, while also preparing for pandemic-era short-term funding to end. We continue to review the work done last year and continue to make the necessary additional decisions alongside our School Leaders – always with our students at the center of all of our work.

The FY25 budget is the first year of many that prioritizes the work differently than the past. Over the next several years we will:

- Move away from the Weighted Student Formula that no longer adequately funds our schools. We want to ensure that those schools with enrollment declines are able to provide services to their students. With Weighted Student Formula, we would not have been able to do it.
- Ensure all our schools can serve all our students by making major investments in the resources required to close the opportunity gaps for our Black and Brown students and provide a continuum of services to meet the needs of our Students with Disabilities and Multilingual Learners.
- And finally, we will be shifting the footprint of our schools so that our physical spaces better support the learning and experiences that our students deserve.

This is a complex and different type of budget than we have experienced over the last several years. This will not be easy, and we will not see results right away. Continuous progress must be the measure of success. We cannot change the past, but we can impact the future. We have worked hard to make it a sustainable budget that supports the priorities we have set forth as a district and as schools.

In appreciation,



Mary Skipper
Superintendent
Boston Public Schools