



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REMOTE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE FY 23 BUDGET HEARING

February 10, 2022

The Boston School Committee held a remote FY23 budget hearing on February 10, 2022 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Dr. Stephen Alkins; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; Lorena Lopera; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; and Quoc Tran.

School Committee Members Absent: Vice Chairperson Michael O’Neill and student representative Xyra Mercer.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

FY23 Budget Presentation with a Focus on School Budgets

Additional FY23 Budget Documents

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. Ms. Mercer was absent. Mr. O’Neill was absent for roll call but joined the executive session in progress. He departed at the beginning of the budget hearing. All other members were present. Ms. Robinson announced that the Committee would adjourn to executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the

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Boston Teachers Union. To have this discussion in an open meeting could have a detrimental effect on the Committee's bargaining position.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Approved - On roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union. Chair Robinson announced that the Committee would return to public session at 6 p.m.

RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

The Committee returned to public session at approximately 6:10 p.m. Ms. Robinson explained that the Committee had just returned from an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union.

Ms. Robinson said that tonight's meeting was being streamed live on Zoom. It will be rebroadcast on Boston City TV. It will also be posted at bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee and on YouTube. She announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and American Sign Language (ASL). The interpreters introduced themselves and gave instructions in their native language on how to access simultaneous interpretation by changing the Zoom channel. Translated meeting documents were posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee prior to the start of the meeting.

Ms. Robinson shared comments about Superintendent Cassellius' recent announcement that she will be transitioning out of her leadership role at BPS at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. She highlighted several of the Superintendent's accomplishments and praised her commitment to expanding equity. The Superintendent thanked the Committee for its support and spoke about laying a strong foundation. She reaffirmed her commitment to BPS. Ms. Robinson spoke about the importance of finishing the school year strong, adding that the Committee will share more information on the process to identify a new superintendent at its February 15th meeting.

FY23 BUDGET PRESENTATION: FOCUS ON SCHOOL BUDGETS

Chief Financial Officer Nate Kuder, Deputy Chief Financial Officer David Bloom, and Deputy Chief Academic Officer and Interim Assistant Superintendent for the Office of English Learners Farah Assiraj presented a report on the Superintendent's Preliminary Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Budget Recommendation with a focus on school budgets.

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The \$1.3 billion proposed budget, which will undergo a weeks-long public review process, represents the largest appropriation to BPS ever made by the City of Boston and features targeted investments in:

- Developing and implementing a Quality Guarantee Framework - \$37.8m
- Supporting accelerated academic outcomes for students - \$26.7m
- Resources to fully adopt the MassCore curriculum - \$9.4m

The funding is aligned to the five-year BPS Strategic Plan and remains focused on academic recovery for BPS students - with a special focus on those who are most in need. The budget continues plans to focus on the social-emotional wellbeing and development of students, recognizing that each student needs time, care, and attention to succeed academically.

BPS is projected to receive an increase of \$40 million, representing an 11% increase over last year's allocation. Per-pupil funding will increase next year by almost \$2,200 per pupil and has increased by almost \$6,400 (31%) over the last 3 years, from approximately \$20,700 in FY20, \$21,700 in FY21, and \$24,900 in FY22, to \$27,100 in FY23.

Investments for equitable recovery will continue to directly support students who have been most impacted by the pandemic. Additionally, federal funding will continue to bolster future reimagining of BPS, guide implementation of the Strategic Plan, support BPS' commitment to being an antiracist district, and advance equitable outcomes for all students, particularly students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and students experiencing poverty.

BPS launched its investment in student and family support with the allocation of a full time nurse at every school in SY20, providing additional support in SY21 as students and staff returned to in-person learning with added Family Liaisons to cultivate trust and to provide needed support to families. Since then, BPS has also added full-time social workers at every school to support social and emotional needs of students. These investments started before the pandemic, but have proven crucial in the overall effort to Return strong and Recover well for BPS. With the FY23 budget, BPS makes plans to continue building upon this support team by investing in school-based academic counselors to help round out the support network to assist principals with their schools' Student Support Teams.

The Boston Public Schools strive to create a high-quality, rigorous, ethnically and culturally responsive curriculum supplemented by instruction that is robust and leads to strong academic pathways. This budget season, BPS is working with school leaders to deliver on access to MassCore at the secondary level, and access to more physical education, art, music, and academic enrichment within student schedules. \$6.2M of the FY23 budget is being allocated to support all high schools in implementing MassCore in 9th grade to set the bar high for college and career readiness as BPS strives towards the strategic goal of accelerated learning and an equitable opportunity for all.

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The FY23 budget will also continue to invest in facilities repairs through the operating budget, and BPS will make critical investments in new facilities through the capital budget. The Quality Guarantee Framework aims to build more gyms, libraries, and auditoriums, and will add critical spaces that are missing from existing facilities. Additionally, the budget will push forward the BPS Quality Guarantee Framework through the expansion of access to quality library collections. As BPS continues to expand high school redesign work, there will be continued investments in athletics at the elementary, middle and high school levels to ensure further learning and enrichment.

Key investments in the proposed FY23 budget include:

Quality Guarantee

- \$7.8M for expanded access to libraries
- \$7.2M to expand Social Emotional Supports
- \$22.8M investments in high quality facilities

Academic Outcomes

- \$5M for Bilingual Supports and Native Language Programming
- \$10M to expand K-8 Academic Counseling
- \$6.7M to reimagine schools, practices, and structures for students with disabilities
- \$5.9M investments in Equitable Literacy

MassCore Participation

- \$6.2M to support all high schools' implementation of MassCore in 9th grade
- \$3.2M for additional 9th grade guidance counselors

Since FY20, BPS has seen an increase of \$2 million in enrollment based funding, \$49 million in soft landings for schools, and \$44 million in positions allocated through the Quality Guarantee Framework. The soft landing funds are directed to schools that are experiencing enrollment declines to prevent a reduction in services. These increased investments, combined with the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, give BPS an incredible opportunity to further invest in student success.

BPS has launched an exciting new project to reimagine what school funding models look like, ensuring the model is reflective of the priorities of students and families, while equitably supporting the unique programming at schools and ensuring a quality guarantee at every school. The development of a more equitable funding formula will support unique programming at schools, allow schools to fund non-compliance positions and programming, enable schools to provide a robust educational experience for students regardless of declining enrollment, and propel high needs students to the forefront.

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Key points of the presentation include:

- BPS has increased per pupil spending by 31% over the last three years.
- Total enrollment has declined roughly 7,100 students in five years.
- K0 - 5 enrollment has declined roughly 4,800 students in five years.
- Enrollment declines are projected to continue.
- Since FY20:
 - Enrollment based funding has increased \$2M
 - Soft Landings have increased by \$49M
 - Positions allocated through the “Quality Guarantee” has increased by \$44M
- BPS has temporarily broken the connection between enrollment declines and funding decreases. FY23 Investment in soft landings increased by \$27M.
- BPS has increased funding to new programs and supports that parents have said they expect at every school as part of its Quality Guarantee.
- The Superintendent is committed to increasing access to safe and updated physical library spaces in schools or in the community.
- Social-emotional and academic counseling is critical for student recovery. To meet the individual needs of students, BPS is building a team of professionals who can create coordinated and comprehensive student plans.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people testified regarding the future of the P.A. Shaw Elementary School

- Alfredo Barros, Dorchester resident and P.A. Shaw Elementary School student
 - Brandon Michel, Dorchester resident and P.A. Shaw Elementary School student
 - Marie Deus, Dorchester resident and P.A. Shaw Elementary School parent
 - Shirell Williams, Dorchester resident and P.A. Shaw Elementary School parent
 - Shakira Rhodes, Dorchester resident and P.A. Shaw Elementary School parent
 - Matt Ennis, Dorchester resident and P.A. Shaw Elementary School teacher
 - Kyle Bounty, Norwood resident and P.A. Shaw Elementary School teacher
 - Jonathan Rodrigues, Mattapan resident and American Federation of Teachers representative
- Robert Jenkins, Mattapan resident and community advocate, testified regarding the budget proposal.
 - Edith Bazile, Dorchester resident and community advocate, testified regarding the budget proposal and support for special education students.
 - Ruby Reyes, Dorchester resident and Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA) executive director, testified regarding the budget proposal.

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SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez expressed support for the creation of a facilities master plan to maximize support for schools amid enrollment declines. Mr. Kuder explained that the facilities team is working on a facility condition assessment to help define what the standard school building should be as the district plans for the future. The reimagine school funding project will explore the interaction between enrollment and equity and to ask critical questions about how the district should be funded. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez encouraged leaders to make smart investments while being mindful about the future portfolio of the district.

Ms. Lopera expressed a sense of urgency around facilities, reconfiguration, and enrollment. She echoed the need for a facilities master plan. She praised the P.A.Shaw Elementary School students who testified during public comment. She asked how the district is supporting schools like the Shaw. Mr. Kuder said that the district has asked the Shaw to close a third grade classroom because they only have one classroom-size number of third graders moving forward. He said district leaders will work with the Shaw community over the next few months to identify a more sustainable path forward.

Dr. Alkins encouraged the district to improve its communication and transparency with the Shaw School community. Mr. Kuder spoke about the district's outreach to Citywide Parent Councils and creating and sharing user-friendly information and resources. He said that the district should have done a better job communicating its configuration plans with the Shaw community and should have communicated earlier that it did. He agreed that the district needs to be more transparent about how the capital budget planning process works. Mr. Bloom spoke about the district's long-term financial planning efforts and commitment to strengthening community engagement.

Ms. Polanco Garcia requested an update on the distribution of ESSER funds. Mr. Kuder deferred to Chief of Accountability Eva Mitchell, who can provide the Committee with a detailed update on ESSER III funding in the near future. He said that all schools have submitted funding requests. Ms. Polanco Garcia emphasized the importance of transparency and communication with families. Mr. Kuder spoke about the importance of partnering with families and listening to all voices.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez spoke about the difficult conversations that the district will have to have around anticipated in the future unless enrollment stabilizes in the early grades. Mr. Kuder agreed, saying that is why the district is intervening by offering the quality guarantee and investing in new resources. He described Universal Pre-K and facilities investments as enrollment strategies.

Mr. Tran encouraged support for BPS staff.

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Ms. Lopera said that conducting an enrollment analysis must be a priority. She asked what investments the district is making to address the gaps around promises being made to school communities and grade configurations.

Mr. Kuder said that BPS needs to be thoughtful about long-term planning, finding a balance between urgency and responsiveness. He said the FY23 budget proposal accomplishes that with investments such as the facilities conditions study and investing in capacity in both the operations department and BuildBPS team.

Dr. Alkins echoed the sentiments raised by Ms. Lopera.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez expressed support for the complex work. He expressed concern that this level of investment and soft landings is unsustainable, particularly as the district continues to see enrollment declines. He encouraged the district to find long-term solutions. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked about investments for support for students who are both special education students and English language learners. Mr. Bloom agreed to follow up with additional data. Ms. Assiraj said that BPS has a special delineation of how it is supporting English learners with disabilities. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked about support for trauma response in schools. The Superintendent said that BPS has at least one social worker in every school. The FY23 budget proposal adds clinical psychologists, bringing BPS in line with the national average. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked if resources are being funded to increase access to sports for young people with disabilities. The Superintendent said that she would follow up with more information about her athletic vision and access for students with disabilities.

Ms. Lopera inquired about mental health support offered to BPS staff. The Superintendent agreed to follow up with more information.

Ms. Robinson asked how many schools are single-strand schools. Mr. Kuder agreed to follow up with the information. He spoke about the complexities around the potential reconfiguration of the Shaw School and the impact it would have on other schools. He said that the district is trying to understand how families navigate the system and plan accordingly. Ms. Robinson asked why some staff use Donors Choose to fund basic supplies that should be funded through the BPS budget. Mr. Kuder and Mr. Bloom explained that schools have the funding for those basic supplies, but that BPS needs better systems and structures to provide the supplies.

The Superintendent said that BPS is in a unique position to still be making major investments when many school districts are making budget cuts and closing schools.

Ms. Robinson expressed concerns about the increase in soft-landings. She encouraged district leaders to engage with school communities that have received multiple years of soft landings. The Superintendent agreed that the district will have to make difficult decisions in the future about school closures and mergers because the current system is not sustainable.

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CLOSING COMMENTS

Ms. Robinson announced that all FY23 budget documents are available online at bostonpublicschools.org/budget. Comments may be emailed to budget@bostonpublicschools.org as well as to the School Committee.

The next remote budget hearing will take place on Tuesday, March 1st at 5 p.m. at which time the Committee will receive a budget presentation focused on the central budget. The final remote budget hearing will take place on Wednesday, March 16th at 5 p.m., prior to the School Committee meeting. The next regular School Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 15th at 5 p.m.

ADJOURN

At approximately 9:30 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the budget hearing.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary