



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REMOTE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE FY 22 BUDGET HEARING

February 11, 2021

The Boston School Committee held a remote FY22 budget hearing on February 11, 2021 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 Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Vice Chairperson Michael O'Neill (joined shortly after roll call); Dr. Hardin Coleman; Ernani DeAraujo; Jeri Robinson; Quoc Tran; and student representative Khymani James.

School Committee Member Absent: Dr. Lorna Rivera.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

FY22 Budget: Schools PowerPoint, February 11, 2021

Superintendent's Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Preliminary Budget Recommendation PowerPoint, February 3, 2021

FY22 Budget Recommendation Equity Impact Statement, February 3, 2021

Superintendent's Letter to Boston School Committee re: FY22 Budget Recommendation February 3, 2021

FY22 Budget Basics

FY22 Budget Recommendation (Excel Version)

1. By Account and Fund
2. By Program and Fund
3. By Department and Fund

Weighted Student Funding

1. WSF: District Table
2. WSF: Reserve Table
3. WSF: Historical Comparison of Weights FY12-FY22
4. WSF: School by School Comparison
5. Individual School Allocation WSF One-Pagers

School Allocations

1. Total Allocations to Schools
2. Supplemental Funding to Schools
3. Individual School Allocation One-Pagers

Background Documents

1. Budget Basics
2. Overview of Proposed Reserve Accounts
3. Grant Projections
4. Overview of Title I
5. Turnaround Schools and School Improvement Grant Funding

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Oliver-Dávila called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. Dr. Rivera was absent. Mr. O'Neill was absent at roll call but joined the hearing a few minutes later. All other members were present. Ms. Oliver-Dávila said that tonight's hearing 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 Spanish, Haitian Creole, 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. Meeting documents were translated into all of the official BPS languages and publicly posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked speakers who had signed up for public comment to begin their testimony by stating the neighborhood where they live. She explained that this is a common practice among other city departments during their public meetings, and will allow the Committee to ensure that all voices are heard and all parts of the city are included.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila welcomed Ernani DeAraujo to the Boston School Committee. Mr. DeAraujo is a lifelong resident of East Boston and serves as the Vice President of Regulatory Affairs and General Counsel at the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center. He is a graduate of Boston Public Schools including Bradley Elementary, Umana Academy, and Boston Latin School. Mr. DeAraujo was sworn in on February 4th. His term will expire on January 3, 2022.

FY22 BUDGET: SCHOOLS

FY22 Budget: Schools - Chief Financial Officer Nate Kuder and BPS Budget Director Miriam Rubin presented a report on the Superintendent's preliminary Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) \$1.3 billion operating budget recommendation with a focus on school budgets. The student-focused budget is framed with the guiding principles of *Return, Recover, and Reimagine*. The recovery budget is heavily focused on improving student outcomes, advancing equitable recovery, and promoting the whole school community's health and wellness amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Co-presenters included Student Chief Financial Officer Marcus McNeill; Brighton High School Principal Andrew Bott; Higginson K0-2 School Principal Karla Jenkins; Higginson 3-8 School Social Worker Brandon Lopez; and Joseph Lee K-8 School Family Liaison Richard Mitchell.

BPS is fortunate to have the steadfast commitment from the City of Boston to maintain the \$80 million investment in BPS for this fiscal year. BPS projects to receive \$36 million, which represents a 7% increase over last year's allocation, at a time when many other interstate and national districts are facing budget cuts. Per-pupil funding will increase by almost \$1,700 per pupil, from approximately \$21,800 in FY21 to \$23,500 in FY22. BPS intends to repair the damage inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic by working to understand better where students are, assess their learning, target interventions, add support, and align expectations with outcomes.

The proposed budget includes \$12 million in investments to reopen schools strongly and restart work that was paused due to COVID-19; \$50 million in investments to support students whose lives and education were disrupted; and \$20 million in investments to come back as the District that students deserve and revisit "ImagineBPS", the Superintendent's strategic plan.

Total actual enrollment declined by 2,286 students (4.3%) between October 2019 and October 2020. This is the third consecutive year of significant declines; enrollment has dropped by 4,788 students (8.5%) over the last three years. The decline was most pronounced in elementary grades, which declined by about 1,800 students (6.8%). Enrollment in grades K0-5 has now dropped by about 3,500 students, or 12.4%, over the last three years. Declines in elementary enrollment may signal additional enrollment declines in future years.

Enrollment is down across all races/ethnicities, but Black and Latinx enrollment decreased more. Decreases in newly enrolled students had the largest impact on English learner programs. Supporting schools with enrollment declines is an explicit equity strategy.

There has been a decline in both the population and the BPS capture rate. Enrollment declined around 1,500 students more than projected in SY20-21. Future year projections are primarily driven by the number of students currently enrolled. BPS is forecasting a projections-to-projections decline of 2,200 students: enrollment declined 1,500 more than expected; Projecting 700 additional declines for next year.

The Superintendent's plan, *Return, Recover, Reimagine*, recognizes that COVID-19 has had a

disproportionate impact on students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and students and families experiencing poverty. Therefore, BPS is seeking to provide financial support to students beyond traditional mechanisms in a way that:

1. Protects school communities from the impact of enrollment decline
2. Provides added supports in the following areas to students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - a. Academics
 - b. Health & Wellness
 - c. Family & Community
 - d. Added funding for schools for recovery
3. Make operational improvements to the way the district serves children

The goal is for every student, in every classroom to end SY21-22 with a greater opportunity to achieve the greatness within them than they had before the pandemic.

The district's consistent and transparent Weighted Student Funding formula enables BPS to differentiate funding based on student need and enrollment. BPS continues to invest in a foundation for all schools, regardless of enrollment. In FY22, the district is expanding its "Foundation for Quality" by guaranteeing a 1.0 Family Liaison and access to Social Workers at every school. BPS is providing \$18.5M to schools with declining enrollment on top of existing soft landings and Foundation for Quality. The budget supports children and families with a social worker and family liaison in every school. It also includes \$1.1 million to expand the Hub Schools initiative.

BPS needs to remove the structures that limit its ability to realize its vision for students.

Facilities and learning environments: Accelerate conversations about our District footprint and grade configurations in light of additional enrollment declines.

Inclusive Strategies: Meet the needs of all children in BPS where they are

- Recovery plans for students to address student needs
- Make inclusive opportunities the default for all students
- Innovate new English learner and English Learners with disabilities programs

School-based investments to reimagine schools, practices, and structures and regional investments to foster collaboration and innovation among schools:

- Early childhood program expansion and program improvements
- Transform the middle grades and increase access to rigor
- Improve access to high quality curricular and vocational options in high schools.

In March, the Superintendent will present the FY22 capital budget, which reflects the following strategies:

- Launching a predictable cycle of new construction projects.

- Reconfigure buildings to expand K0 & K1 and meet the needs of a K-6 / 7-12 pathway.
- Reinvigorate existing buildings for a reimagined student experience.
- Leverage targeted projects that reduce deferred maintenance.

BPS continues to expand in Universal Pre-Kindergarten through a mixed-delivery system with pathways to quality expansion.

Enrollment patterns in K-8 schools affect programming and student experience. Roughly one third of all 6th graders in K-8 schools do not return to the same school for 7th grade. In K-8s, nearly 50% of 7th grade classrooms are below the “break even” point in Weighted Student Funding; the 8th grade figure is nearly 40%. Reimagining K-8 Schools toward K0-6 is a cohesive strategy to expand K0 and K1 seats while expanding opportunities in the 7th & 8th grades.

BPS has experienced a decline in high school enrollment due to the expansion of charter schools. The district is reconfiguring middle schools by expanding 7-12 high schools as part of a cohesive strategy to reimagine the 7th and 8th grade experience and add rigor to prepare for high school.

BPS is setting aside \$20M in ESSER Part 2 funding to “Reimagine” BPS. This will include additional funding towards existing, critical District strategies:

- Removing structures to full inclusion
- Closing opportunity gaps in High Schools
- Becoming an Anti-Racist District
- High Performing Central Office

The district is also looking to foster innovation and engage schools to address our systemic challenges:

- School-based investments to reimagine schools, practices, and structures
- Regional investments to foster collaboration and innovation among schools

Mr. Bott said that the proposed budget is fundamentally grounded in equity. It would allow Brighton High School to maintain and expand its offerings despite enrollment declines.

Ms. Jenkins spoke about the Higginson K0-2 School’s effort to engage and support families. She said that the school has a significant homeless population that will benefit from the addition of a full-time social worker in FY22.

Mr. Mitchell spoke about his work as a family liaison, engaging with families and connecting them with services.

Mr. Lopez spoke about the importance of BPS having a social worker in every school. He advocated for funding for supervision for social workers.

The Committee will host two additional [remote budget hearings prior](#) to voting on the Superintendent's final FY22 budget recommendation on March 24th. All FY22 budget documents are posted online at bostonpublicschools.org/budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Ari Rodriguez and Jason Diaz, BPS students, and members, Sociedad Latina, testified regarding hiring more counselors and moving away from school safety officers.
- Mike Heichman, member, Boston Education Justice Alliance, testified regarding the budget.
- Sharon Hinton, member Black Teachers Matter, testified in favor of student voting rights.
- Sugey Scannell, parent, Hurley K-8 School, testified regarding the budget.
- Estephany Almanzar, parent, Blackstone K-8 Schools, testified regarding facility upgrades to the school.
- Rosalba Carbucia, parent, McKinley School, testified regarding the budget.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Dr. Coleman asked about the reduction in Black and Latinx enrollment. He asked the district to explore the role of gentrification on BPS enrollment patterns, the role of the U.S. immigration policy on BPS enrollment patterns, and what factors are contributing to the decline in enrollment in 7th grade.

Mr. Kuder spoke about the high cost of housing in Boston and more residents aging in place. He said that fewer people are moving to Boston due to the COVID pandemic and former President Trump's immigrations policies. He said that many students leave for charter schools in 5th grade and many leave their home schools for exam schools in 7th grade.

Ms. Robinson said that she has heard parents of young students express frustration when they cannot secure seats in their neighborhood. She suggested that the district work with community partners to create a citywide strategy for grade reconfiguration. She said that every school needs to be of high quality. The Superintendent spoke about her desire to create a children's cabinet with representatives from various city departments.

Mr. James spoke about the high cost of living in Boston. He advocated for more social workers and guidance counselors. The Superintendent spoke about the investments that the district has made by adding those positions last year and this year. Mr. Kuder spoke about how the district connects students with resources.

Mr. O'Neill asked what the district is doing holistically to support homeless families. He requested more information about the Hub Schools model, as well as the social-emotional student support team. The Superintendent agreed to follow up. Mr. O'Neill said that he is sensitive to the communities that worked hard to build K-8 schools. He clarified that grade

reconfiguration is not part of the FY22 budget proposal but rather the starting point for a community conversation.

Ms. Robinson suggested that the district consider funding smaller classes. Mr. Kuder spoke about how BPS provides schools experiencing declining enrollment with soft landings to provide stability. He also spoke about supports for special education students and English Learners as part of a multi-year effort to invest in students. Ms. Robinson suggested that BPS partner with area higher education institutions to provide supervisors for school social workers. The Superintendent agreed to follow up.

Mr. DeAraujo spoke about the successful use of telehealth at the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center where he serves as Vice President of Regulatory Affairs and General Counsel. He said that telehealth has helped to expand access to health services and lower costs.

Mr. James requested data on how many BPS students are using telehealth. He suggested adding homelessness as a factor in the district's decision-making process when determining how many social workers schools receive. Mr. Kuder explained that the district considers the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged. Mr. James spoke about the importance of mental health supports. He expressed concern about some schools raising significant external funds and suggested that those funds be redistributed across schools. Mr. Kuder said that some schools have 501c3s. The Superintendent said that she is exploring equity issues in school fundraising. Chief of Student, Family and Community Advancement Monica Roberts said that the district is exploring having the Boston Education Development Fund (BEDF) manage fundraising in a way that is transparent and aligned to the strategic plan. She said that the district is working to assess whether current policies may be perpetuating inequities in terms of our resource development as well as potential implications on any formal agreements that the district may need to have with school-based fundraising partners as well as private entities..

Mr. Tran said that he is impressed with the budget team for building a thorough and innovative budget.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila thanked and praised the presenters, particularly the Student Chief Financial Officer Marcus McNeill. She expressed support for the establishment of a children's cabinet. She spoke about the impact that neighborhood schools could have in terms of creating a sense of community and transportation savings. She said she supports greater transparency with school fundraising. She encouraged the district to think creatively about supporting social workers.

ADJOURN

At approximately 8:03 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the budget hearing.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary