



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE FY21 BUDGET HEARING  
AND BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**March 25, 2020**

The Boston School Committee held a virtual FY21 budget hearing and meeting on March 25, 2020 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit [www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

**ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael Loconto; Vice Chairperson Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael O’Neill; Dr. Lorna Rivera; Jeri Robinson; Quoc Tran, and Student Representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Agenda

Boston School Committee Meeting Minutes: February 26, 2020

Grants for Approval Totaling \$708,019

<b>Amount</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Sites</b>
\$5,000	2020	STARS Grant	Increase	Districtwide
\$98	2020	Early College Planning Grant	Increase	Madison Park Tech High School
\$69,261	2020	IDEA Part B	Increase	Districtwide
\$12,677	2020	Special Education Early Childhood Entitlement Grant	Increase	Districtwide
\$28,540	2020	Title I Part A	Increase	Districtwide
\$28,608	2020	Title II Part A	Increase	Districtwide

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\$153,506	2020	Title III Part A: Immigrant Children and Youth	New	Districtwide
\$88,500	2020	STARTALK Arabic Summer Academy	New	Charlestown High School
\$50,000	2020	Innovation Pathway Implementation Grant	New	Dearborn Stem Academy
\$31,829	2020	Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnership Funds	New	Charlestown HS / Bunker Hill CC
\$90,000	2020	Alternative ELE	New	Districtwide
\$150,000	2020	Gateway City Grant for High Quality, Intensive English Language	New	Districtwide

Superintendent’s Revised FY21 Budget Recommendation PowerPoint

Memo from the Superintendent

FY21 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: School by School Comparison
4. Individual School WSF One-Pagers

School Allocations

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Loconto called the meeting to order. He welcomed all attendees to the Committee’s first remote meeting. He thanked Mayor Walsh and his staff, and Dr. Cassellius and her team for their tireless work on behalf of students and families during the COVID-19 health crisis. He thanked all Boston Public Schools (BPS) staff, from bus drivers and cafeteria workers, to custodians and school police, to school leaders and teachers, to Central Office Staff and Executive team, and to

all of those volunteers from elsewhere in City government and across the community, who have worked hard to support students during this difficult time.

Mr. Loconto said that in light of recent events involving the COVID-19 health crisis and the current district-wide school closure, it would be appropriate to have the Superintendent provide her update at the start of the hearing.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

*As prepared for delivery.*

Thank you all for joining us tonight. Before I get started I want to give a huge #BPS Proud ShoutOut to our entire team at BPS! Everyone has just been outstanding but there are a few people I would like to thank tonight. These are incredibly difficult times and I want to start off by thanking everyone in the community for coming together. I have witnessed so much incredible generosity and ingenuity. We are all in this together. I'd like to discuss what we have been doing, and what resources are available to our families.

We have been providing free meals to our families at 16 BPS schools, spread across the city. Breakfast and lunch meals are available Monday to Friday, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Information on locations, including the dozens of other emergency meal sites throughout the City of Boston is available at [bostonpublicschools.org](http://bostonpublicschools.org). Today we provided our families with 6,605 breakfast and lunch meals. As of this afternoon, we have served 40,282 meals since this program launched last Tuesday. And where necessary we have begun home delivery of meals to families who may not otherwise have a way to get them

Two weeks ago we purchased 20,000 Chromebooks, adding to the supply we already had, to be able to provide access to adequate technology to our students during this extended period of school closure.

As of today, we have distributed **19,002** Chromebooks to our students, including Chromebooks from our previous inventory. We expect once we have our final numbers in from today that we will surpass 20,000 Chromebooks distributed. Families in need of a Chromebook can complete the form at [bostonpublicschools.org/laptop](http://bostonpublicschools.org/laptop). The form is available in all 10 of the district's major languages. We will then contact families with information about a delivery appointment. We also have information on low-cost internet access available to families, how to get started with your Chromebook, home learning tips and more, at [bostonpublicschools.org/laptop](http://bostonpublicschools.org/laptop).

Two weekends ago, members of our Academics team and other Central Office staff really mobilized to compile and print packets of learning materials so students could take them home with them on March 16, the last day that schools were open. These learning materials are still available at our 16 food distribution sites for families coming out to pick up meals. These are supplemental and not mandatory assignments. We received so much support from law firms, higher education institutions, and other community organizations two weekends ago, to ensure that we could provide these learning materials to our students. We were able to print 43,000 packets, 21 different packet types, printed from 14 different locations, for a total of 3.1 million pages. A fantastic team effort!

Educational resources are available for students and families on Google Classroom and Clever Backpack, online locations where students and families can find materials and work independently on activities at home. Families can access learning materials at: [bostonpublicschools.org/backpack](https://bostonpublicschools.org/backpack) using the student's BPS Google account. We have so many schools doing different things, from the McKay story time on social media in the mornings, to the Mattahunt's new YouTube page with educational videos made by staff. So many of our departments from Arts to History, have come up with creative ways to keep students engaged. We will be compiling all these resources on a new online destination for BPS families, which we aim to launch this week. The site will have a host of resources for families, easy accessibility to Google Classrooms for individual school communities, and more. Today we had more than 22,000 students online at the same time. As we distribute more Chromebooks, and families become more accustomed to this learning platform, we anticipate these numbers to increase.

My team and I continue to stay connected with each other by holding virtual meetings and conference calls. I've hosted a series of conference calls with school leaders, including one in which Mayor Walsh joined us. Things were changing hour to hour and Mayor Walsh joined us to walk us through and articulate exactly what was going on. We've been holding daily check-in meetings since the school closure to discuss operational plans and provide one another with status updates around food security efforts, technology deliveries, and many other projects. I'm also on the Mayor's Cabinet, so I am in constant communication with our other City leaders as we all work to problem-solve and collaborate to help our community through this.

Yesterday we closed our school buildings to the public, aside from the 16 emergency meal sites. Over the last week, school leaders have been in and out of schools, handing out materials to families and answering questions. To help stop the spread of the virus, we have closed down our school buildings and have taken steps to significantly reduce traffic in the Bolling Building. Custodians have been doing regular maintenance cleaning of our buildings and the Eliot building has been fully cleaned and disinfected. We are also very mindful of extra cleaning and social distancing measures at our food delivery sites.

Our Special Education team has been working to set up at least weekly contact with our students, through Google Classroom and/or by phone, to provide support for distance learning - just like other general ed teachers are doing for all of our BPS students. Over the last couple days, members of our Office of Special Education made 4252 calls to contact special education families of students with door-to-door transportation to offer delivery of free meals (in multiple languages). Educators have delivered assistive technology devices to homes, as well as Chromebooks to support online learning. Special ed team coordinators are reaching out to families to continue scheduling of IEP team meetings - online during this time - so that students with disabilities will have ongoing services pursuant to their educational plans that remain in force. Schools have set up tiered supports to provide to families via online channels and phone calls. Related service providers (school counselors, behavioral health staff, etc.) have established schedules of consultations with students with disabilities to provide necessary support during this difficult time.

Congratulations to the Burke Bulldogs who defeated St. Mary's in the Division 3 Boys Basketball semifinals! Since the state finals were cancelled due to the coronavirus emergency,

the Bulldogs will go down as Division 3 State Champions! I want to give a shout out to all our student-athletes, many of them who participated in postseason play. This has been difficult for all of our students, and has of course impacted our spring athletics.

As you all know, we have amazing kids. I have held a conference call with our youth and answered their many questions and received valuable feedback about how we can better serve them. I know Ms. Evelyn Reyes will also provide an update and I look forward to hearing directly from her. The youth asked about access to hygiene products and we have worked with Catie's Closet to provide soaps, shampoos, oral care and menstrual products at all 16 distribution sites. I am working closely with BSAC and the youth cabinet weekly to engage with youth, answer their questions and hear their suggestions. I have even launched a new Instagram account to host town halls and other live events with the youth. They asked me to set up an account so I did: SuptCassellius. For the older among us, I also have a Twitter that I usually post updates on multiple times a day - getting out all the great work going on in BPS and also to update the public straight from the superintendent. During this difficult time, it is important for us to stay connected and to ensure the information we are getting is accurate and up to date. You can always go to [www.bostonpublicschools.org](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org) where we are updating our information, sometimes by the hour.

Again, I first want to thank all our parents and extended family who are pitching in with the teaching and learning activities for our students. I also want to thank the Mayor for his steadfast leadership and for his support of our kids by providing them with the Chromebooks. Although we are still working to reach all our families, we know that these computers will be essential to our students staying connected to their learning, their classmates, and their teachers. It will also help our families access needed wraparound service. I'd also like to thank my Senior team. Charlene Briner, Chief of Staff, Andrea Zayas, Chief Academic Officer, Monica Roberts, Chief of Family Advancement and Partnership, Corey Harris and his work with our DESE partners, Mark Racine, our favorite and fantastic IT guy, Charles Grandson for helping us keep our eye on equity, Tammy Pust, who has been here just three short months, but was critical in the early stages as our COVID Czar and now has helped us navigate with our Human Capital and Labor needs with Al Taylor so our workers so they too had their needs met, Sam Depina who has stepped up and into the COO position and worked with our nutrition staff to ensure our kids were getting fed, the Superintendents who are working with their school teams, and of course, I want to thank CFO Nate Kuder, who will now share the amazing work he and the entire budget team has done as we look toward next year's budget. Keeping this on track during this crisis has been important for our continuity in planning for next year. Although we were not able to present tonight on the final strategic plan and DESE review update, this budget is directly reflective of that body of work and will lift up key areas of focus for all of us these next three years.

As you all know, Mayor Walsh has committed \$100 million over the next 3 years. Despite this virus, we are forging ahead and also being cautious. Today we made the difficult decision to suspend all non-essential spending. We are taking this step so that we can revisit future purchasing given our evolving reality and the many unknowns we will encounter as we resume normal operations from academics to facilities. We will be watching our budget closely and have already from day one coded all new spending specific to COVID so that we could accurately account for it and also be ready in cases whereby we might be provided relief.

Ms. Oliver-Davila thanked the Superintendent and district staff for coordinating the distribution of tens of thousands of meals and Chromebooks for BPS families. She spoke about the importance of digital and telephone translations for BPS families who speak languages other than English, as well as the importance of teachers connecting with students both digitally and by phone.

Mr. O'Neill asked a number of questions about the district's response to the COVID-19 health crisis. He said that BNN-TV and WGBH-TV Boston are providing educational programming for children on weekdays from 12 – 5 p.m. Students can request a Chromebook at [www.bostonpublicschools.org](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org) or by calling 3-1-1. The Superintendent confirmed that all City of Boston employees are being paid during this period of social distancing. The district is in negotiations with the Boston Teachers Union to work out the details of home learning.

Dr. Rivera asked if a waiver for MCAS is expected and how the district will approach summer learning. The Superintendent said that the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education would need to approve a waiver to the MCAS for this academic year. She said that her executive team is exploring what summer learning will look like this year.

Mr. Loconto thanked the BPS staff and volunteers for their incredible effort to distribute Chromebooks to students.

*Approved* - The Committee approved the Superintendent's Report by unanimous consent.

## REPORT

***Superintendent's Revised FY21 Budget Recommendation*** – Chief Financial Officer Nate Kuder presented the Superintendent's revised FY21 total general fund budget recommendation in the amount of \$1,258,633,065. Mr. Kuder summarized the changes reflected in this proposal versus the original budget proposed to the Committee on February 5, 2020.

The original district proposal included a \$951K reserve to support lower performing schools with declining enrollment. This reserve was first created for the FY18 budget based on feedback from community members and the School Committee. As schools have moved through the budget process in the last two months, dollars from the centrally-held reserve have been allocated to school budgets. Ten schools received additional funding from the original reserve. The amounts were given primarily based on the size of the budget's impact, with some adjustments made by School Superintendents using information from school applications and their understanding of the student's needs. This year's focus was on making a significant investment in schools facing the largest enrollment and fiscal challenges:

- UP Academy Boston: 1 FTE, High School Choice Position
- Trotter K-8 School: 1 FTE, School Finalizing Decision
- Burke High School: 2 FTE, School Finalizing Decision

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- Irving Middle School: 1 FTE, Bringing Restorative Justice and Family Liaison to Full-time
- Brighton High School: 1 FTE, Assistant Principal
- Sumner Elementary: 1 FTE, School Finalizing Decision
- Excel High School: 2 FTE, JROTC and Work Based Learning Coordinator
- Higginson/Lewis K-8: 0.5 FTE Social Worker Mattahunt Elementary School: Non-Personnel for Afterschool Program
- Sarah Greenwood K-8 School: 0.4 FTE, bringing Bilingual Special Education position to Full-time

Every year, the initial proposed budget contains a number of additional reserves that the district intends to partially liquidate throughout the budget process. These reserves are held in the Budget Office and are eventually transferred to school budgets. Below is a summary of those changes for this year. While the district is still holding some reserves that will be liquidated during the summer and fall, the following funds have moved from central reserves onto school budgets:

- Updated allocations for WSF based on updated projections: \$266,438
- Finalization of new investment in Transformation schools: \$176,512
- Turnaround transition support to school budgets: \$149,178
- Other Special Education supports: \$122,311

Across these four areas, school budgets have increased by a total of \$1,544,237 since the original proposal. Fifty-three schools have seen increases in their individual budgets since February 5th.

There have been a number of small changes to the proposed budget for central departments. These are more limited in scope and represent transfers between central departments and between account types within a department.

The only material change in the central office budget is a transfer of the funding for the Excellence for All (EFA) initiative. The staff and non-personnel have been transferred from the Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) to the Academics Division. OAG was originally asked to oversee the creation, development, and growth of EFA with the intention to move it to the Academics once it became part of how we do business as a system. FY21 marks the official transfer of the initiative to the Academics Division who will begin the process of integrating the lessons and best practices around Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP) developed by OAG. The Academics division staff will now work across all content areas to spread the authentic learning practices and experiences to all students K-12.

Dr. Rivera encouraged the district to explore what would be needed to provide every school with a baseline funding for a quality school.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the district for providing soft landings to many schools experiencing enrollment declines or other changes that impact school budgets. Mr. Kuder noted that responses

to Mr. O'Neill's questions from the March 10<sup>th</sup> budget hearing were posted online at [bostonpublicschools.org/budget](http://bostonpublicschools.org/budget). Mr. O'Neill discussed the current uncertainty around federal education funding.

Ms. Robinson asked if any schools were not well supported through the proposed budget. Mr. Kuder explained that the budget team had closely collaborated with school communities for the past several months to mitigate any potential negative impact and said he felt confident that the budget recommendation serves schools well.

Ms. Reyes asked about the BPS budget process. Mr. Kuder explained that the budget process begins in August with financial projections, evolves in October with enrollment projections and continues to evolve through the Superintendent's preliminary budget recommendation to the School Committee in early February, through the budget hearings, until the Committee votes on the Superintendent's final budget recommendation on the fourth Wednesday in February. Ms. Reyes asked the district to explore what a fully funded budget would look like.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following people testified regarding the Superintendent's FY21 Revised Budget Recommendation:

Annissa Essaibi-George	Boston City Councilor At-Large
Khymani James	student, BLA and BSAC/Youth on Board's steering committee
Mike Heichman	former BPS parent
Wendy Lam	teacher, Excel High School
Michelle Caine	teacher, Excel High School
Tracy Curtin	teacher, P.A. Shaw School
Ayannah Hilton	parent, P.A. Shaw School
Jeremiah Hilton	student, P.A. Shaw School
Jillian Meade	teacher, Succeed Boston at the Counseling and Intervention Center
Flavia Santos	Program Manager of Succeed Boston, BPS Counseling & Intervention Center
Brian Lobue	Lee Academy Pilot School
Jeff Timberlake	Reading Recovery / ESL teacher, Curtis Guild Elementary
Heidi Winston	School Nurse, BTU Pilot School
Sarah Idrissu	Executive Director of Educators for Excellence Boston
Aded Abioye	teacher, Higginson-Lewis K-8 School
Leidy Quiceno	Outreach Director at E4E-Boston



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Deborah Gray	grandparent, Lee Academy Pilot School
Janelle Bruno	member, Access4All
Al Vega	Director of Policy & Programs, MassCosh
Ruby Reyes	Director, Boston Education Justice Alliance
Meghan Hines	Reading Recovery Specialist, Boston Conservatory Charter School
Kerri Ann Connelly	Reading Specialist, Ellison Parks Early Education Center

**CLOSING COMMENTS**

Mr. Loconto thanked those who had testified live, as well as those who had submitted videos and written comments to the Committee for consideration in advance of the budget hearing.

**ADJOURNMENT OF FY21 BUDGET HEARING**

*Approved* – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the FY21 budget hearing.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Loconto called the Boston School Committee meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance.

**ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael Loconto; Vice Chairperson Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael O’Neill; Dr. Lorna Rivera; Jeri Robinson; Quoc Tran, and Student Representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: FEBRUARY 26, 2020**

*Approved* – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the February 26, 2020 School Committee meeting

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE’S REPORT**

Student Representative Evelyn Reyes addressed the following topics in her oral report:

- The Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) continues to meet regularly utilizing Zoom.
- Superintendent Cassellius has met with BSAC remotely to discuss online learning and how to keep students involved in their education.

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- BSAC is doing daily midday check-ins with students, and staff is calling students to make sure they have the resources needed to cope with COVID-19 health crisis.
- BSAC is adding weekly Wednesday support group meetings.
- This transition to online learning has been hard for many students. Some of the concerns raised by students are:
  - Not every student has heard from their school/teacher
  - The packets that were given out - the point of them is not clear
  - Variations in the amount of work that each student is getting
  - Grading systems are not clear
  - Students who receive support in the classroom are left in limbo
- Ms. Reyes shared a more comprehensive list of concerns from students with the Superintendent and her Executive Team for follow up.

Mr. O'Neill thanked BSAC for its efforts to strengthen student engagement.

Ms. Oliver-Davila expressed frustration with the disparities student are experiencing. She asked Ms. Reyes to share with the Committee the issues that arise at BSAC's weekly support group meetings.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

***Approved*** – The Committee approved by unanimous consent grants for approval totaling \$708,019.

Dr. Rivera asked if the general fund budget, once approved by the Committee, could be revised. Mr. Loconto explained that the Superintendent's budget recommendation is based on state and federal funding projections, which may change somewhat. He suggested that the Committee receive a budget update in the fall.

Mr. O'Neill asked how the district would spend additional funding if such funding became available after the Committee's vote. The Superintendent said that she would focus additional dollars on the district's response to the COVID-19 crisis, such as summer learning and special education supports.

Mr. Loconto invited Committee members to share their final thoughts on the Superintendent's revised FY21 budget recommendation.

Ms. Reyes said that this year's budget is an improvement over previous year's budgets and encouraged the district do even more.

Mr. Tran expressed support for the budget recommendation and thanked the budget team for their hard work.

Dr. Rivera expressed support for the budget recommendation, noting increases in supports for English learners and special education.

Ms. Robinson talked about the budget process as a time for reflection on how BPS supports students. She said that she is supportive of the budget recommendation.

Dr. Coleman expressed support for the budget recommendation, and thanked the City for providing \$100 million in additional funding over three years.

Mr. O'Neill lauded the additional funding that BPS will receive from the City, adding that in his conversations as Chair-Elect of the Executive Committee of the Council of Great City Schools, he has not found another school district that is receiving such a sizable funding increase. He expressed support for the budget.

Ms. Oliver-Davila thanked Mayor Walsh for the additional funding. She expressed support for the budget proposal, noting funding for staff diversity, soft landings, and supports for English learners and special education. She said that she looks forward to future discussions about critical issues such as alternative education, MassCore, dual language opportunities, and college and career readiness.

Mr. Loconto praised the Superintendent's for aligning her budget recommendation with the community engagement tour and strategic planning process. He thanked Mayor Walsh for committing \$100 million in additional funding to BPS over three years. He said that key investment, such as new technology and additional supports for the lowest performing schools, will close opportunity gaps and improve equity. He thanked the BPS and City finance teams for their work. He closed by saying that he is supportive of the budget recommendation.

**Approved** – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the general fund budget for Fiscal Year 2021 in the amount of \$1,258,633,065, as submitted by the Superintendent of Schools.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **ADJOURN**

At approximately 8:45 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan  
Executive Secretary