

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
Boston School Committee

FROM: John P. McDonough
Interim Superintendent

DATE: February 4, 2015

SUBJECT: Preliminary FY16 Budget Recommendation

Tonight, we submit for your review the FY16 preliminary budget for the Boston Public Schools (BPS). This budget is notable on many fronts, but at its core it represents our collective goal of ensuring every child has access to exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovating, welcoming schools.

Mayor Martin J. Walsh has once again demonstrated a clear commitment to public education in Boston. This year, the City of Boston aims to increase its allocation to BPS between 3% - 4% over the district's current year budget (FY15). This investment in the BPS is significant and will allow for meaningful, and both new and continued, investments that directly benefit students and support our efforts to eliminate achievement and opportunity gaps.

This FY16 budget recommendation prioritizes investments such as:

- An increase in **Weighted Student Funding** (WSF) budgets directed to schools by more than **\$20 million**
- **\$5 million** to add **40 minutes of instructional time** at 20 schools (first cohort of 60 over the next three years), the result of an agreement between the BPS and the Boston Teachers Union.
- An allocation of **\$4 million** to support extended learning time at current and former level 4 turnaround schools and other extended learning time schools.
- Increasing access to **100 more pre-K** seats throughout the city, an investment of **\$1 million**.

- **\$4.8 million** to continue, for a second year, the **early hiring of educators** to ensure BPS can attract and retain top talent.
- Prioritizing **\$2.1 million** to increase and maintain the district's capacity to offer **more inclusive classroom opportunities** to special education students.

While the economy is certainly stronger this year than it has been in the recent past, we know that costs continue to rise and external funding sources are becoming increasingly more limited. As a district, we face approximately \$58 million in rising costs and an additional \$14 million decline in state and federal revenue. As of this presentation, our budget gap stands between \$42 million and \$51 million. Moving forward, we will be actively working to close this gap through multiple strategies, which we will lay out for you tonight. To ensure we can invest where we know we'll have the greatest impact it requires us to examine our structure and expenditures.

We must take this opportunity to evaluate our core, or central office, functions to ensure that we are using the resources we have as efficiently as possible. This strategy will be our most profound, financially. We must consider policy decisions and efficiencies identified last year that will help curb rising transportation costs, such as expanding MBTA service to seventh graders - a process that will take into account the recommendation of the Middle School Task Force established by the Mayor last year.

Finally, we must address the structural imbalance in our district that ultimately, if left unaddressed, will adversely impact every single student we serve; there are too many seats for the number of students enrolled in the BPS. Put simply: our resources are spread too thin and that puts every student at a disadvantage. A limited number of school closures and program consolidations must be part of our strategy to ensure we can use our resources wisely and efficiently.

We acknowledge this is a topic that, rightfully so, will raise concerns for families, students and educators. We are committed to conducting a transparent and detailed process and will be offering more specifics on this proposal in the coming days to ensure families, BPS staff and students are engaged and supported.

This annual budget exercise is one that is about much more than solving a math problem. At its core a budget is a statement of our values. We are no longer doing business as usual in the Boston Public Schools and in many ways this budget reflects that. This budget is a first step in a comprehensive assessment of strategies that must be considered for the long-term success of the Boston Public Schools. We are targeting our resources in more meaningful ways to ensure all students are supported by exemplary educators and staff, in every school, every day.

The budget recommendation before you builds on a plan that positions the Boston Public Schools to be stronger and continue to serve as a national leader in urban public education.