

# FY25 Budget Questions and Answers – February 29, 2024

## Education/Training/Conferences

### **1. What is driving the increase for the line item Education/Training/Conferences, and what are the intended outcomes?**

The District's strategic plan, school improvement plans, state-mandated changes, and the school committee's budget guidelines drive the increase in this line item.

The Office of Teaching and Learning has included funds to support the move to standards-based instruction in literacy. The Office of Educational Equity has included funds to support our commitment to educational equity with a focus on cultural competence and responsive practices. Specific to Special Education, the Office of Student Services (OSS) is transitioning to updated Individualized Education forms and procedures, which requires professional learning across the District for every age and grade. Regarding social emotional learning, the purchase of targeted curriculum and increased training and support for all educators and clinicians has led to significant enhancements in supporting all students. The Office of the Superintendent and School Committee has included funds to pay for a membership to the New England School Development Council Association (NESDEC).

### **2. What was the overall Education/Training/Conferences budget in FY22 and FY23?**

The total expenses by year:

- FY22 - \$333,733
- FY23 - \$147,077

Total budget allocations for FY24 and FY25:

- FY24 - \$293,252
- FY25 - \$456,667

## Office of Student Services

### **1. What is causing the 94% increase (\$236,080) in the OSS claims and settlements category?**

Prior to FY25, Claims and Settlements were funded from the Settlement and Claims line item and the Out-of-District Tuition lines. In FY23, all claims and settlements were recorded to the Claims and Settlement line to accurately capture all of the expenses. FY24 Claims

and Settlements are estimated to be over \$750,000, not \$250,000. In FY25 all funding for settlements are properly accounted for in the Claims and Settlement line. The difference between the FY24 and 25 budgets represents a course correction in accounting rather than an actual increase in true costs.

Account Description	FY23 Expense	FY24 Budget	FY25 Proposal	FY24 vs FY25
Claims & Settlements	\$1,699,391	\$250,000	\$486,080	\$236,080

**2. Can you explain the difference between "Tuition to Mass Schools" vs. "Tuition to Non-public Schools" vs. "Tuition to Out of State Schools"?**

The definitions for these categories are as follows:

***Tuition to Mass Schools:*** Tuition that PSB pays for Brookline students to attend Special Education Programs in other Massachusetts Public schools.

***Tuition to Non-Public Schools:*** Tuition that PSB pays for Brookline students to attend Special Education Programs in Massachusetts Non-Public (Private) schools. This includes both residential and day placements at Chapter 766 schools.

***Tuition to Out-of-State Schools:*** Tuition that PSB pays for Brookline students to attend Special Education Programs in Out-of-State Public and Non-Public (Private) Schools.

**3. The Special Education tuition request calls for \$598,935; what is causing this change?**

The main drivers of this change relate to shifts in student placements and increases in tuition charged by Chapter 766 schools. There are several students shifting from day to residential placements, which is a more restrictive setting. Residential placements differ from day placement in a few ways; students have round the clock care which adds significant cost. That being said, transportation costs decrease because they are not being transported on a daily basis.

Note: Chapter 766 school tuition rates are set by the Operational Services Division (OSD) and increase annually, and schools can request additional rate increases throughout the year.

#### **4. Why are Out-of-District Schools (OOD) so costly?**

Out-of-district schools are costly because they typically have smaller student/staff ratios, more constant supervision, adaptive equipment, significant medical services, and more. If a student is in a residential placement, it would also include 24-hour care, room, and board. When students are placed in OOD schools, PSB is selecting the best outside provider to address the student's needs.

*Note:* The District receives partial reimbursement from the State (Circuit Breaker funding) to provide some relief, but a significant gap exists between what the State reimburses Districts for special education and what it actually costs.

#### **5. Why is the Office of Student Services expense increasing by 15.6% (\$697,311) if the number of students going out of the District is not increasing?**

Students requiring Out-of-District (OOD) placements fit into one of three programs: Collaborative Placements, Private Day Placements, or Residential Placements. On average, OOD tuition increases approximately 4% annually but doesn't necessarily cover all the needed services. Circuit Breaker reimbursement fluctuates, which further impacts costs. However, OOD schools can apply throughout the year for Extraordinary Relief through the Operational Services Division (OSD), which can be used for building projects and other issues. Increasingly, we are seeing School Districts receive letters of approval for tuition increases of up to 12% in the middle of the year. PSB accounts for all these increases.

Despite stabilizing our student numbers, the cost shows a different result. Over the last three fiscal years, our OOD population has been decreasing; we are slowing down the overall growth of OOD placements through exemplary In-District options that offer our students the opportunity to remain in their home communities.

It should be noted that students requiring Out-of-District programs generally have more significant needs. For example, some students may require additional staffing beyond what an out-of-district program generally provides, which must be considered in our planning. Our efforts to continue developing comprehensive In-District programs remain a high priority, and our proposal to expand the PSB Winthrop House model for grades 6-8 will support students with significant therapeutic needs to remain in-district, the least restrictive environment. If we don't actively work on this, the OOD numbers and costs will grow at a much faster rate.

## Office of Educational Equity

### **1. Who is the consultant proposed for the equity audit work?**

A proposed consultant has not been selected. We have had conversations with the following consultants:

- Disruptive Education Equity Project (DEEP) - We are working with Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson as part of our M.A.S.S. REDI work.
- Longview Education, LLC

### **2. Will the equity audit include an exhaustive curricula review under the above mentioned parameters?**

PSB has conducted several curricular reviews, but they were limited in scope. The equity audit would comprehensively assess Pre-K through High School curricula, instructional, systems, etc.

### **3. What are the intended outcomes of the proposed investments in the OOE department?**

The investment will develop Equity Leaders at each school, establish an all-encompassing district-wide data set that spans Pre-K through 12th Grade, and make recommendations for action.

A significant portion of the requested increase in funding will establish and compensate 22 Equity Leads (two in each K-8 school and four in the high school) and one unaligned position. Equity Leads will be current school-based staff members who will be compensated to lead equity at work at their respective schools meaningfully. This builds the capacity of this office while minimizing expenditure by utilizing the capacity we already have.

Note: Funding for equity leads and the IDEAs membership has been moved from the operating budget to the Title IIA grant.

## Demography

### **1. For the Baker School student population, are the project numbers 2025 reflecting the new 250 units Franklin House at Puddingstone in Hancock Village apartment complex opening this Summer 2024?**

The enrollment projections prepared by Cropper GIS and NESDEC took into account enrollment yield for this development. Based on the projection, we believe there is enough capacity within the sections at the Baker School to accommodate any additional students who may enroll from the Puddingstone development at Hancock Village.

- 2. Is there a projected Metco student quota? There are overpopulation concerns, and we want to ensure we are hosting students without impacting the District's students.**

Recent demographic studies and enrollment projections forecast PSB's enrollment will decline over the next five years and therefore, we do not expect overcrowding to be an issue in our schools. There is no quota for METCO students. Generally, annual METCO enrollment is around 300 students.

## Operations (Facilities and Transportation)

- 1. Is the South Brookline bus being funded as promised in the operating override or returning to a per-child fee? (Page 23-24)**

The South Brookline buses for the High School that were approved as part of the override at the spring Town meeting are fully funded within the FY25 proposed budget.

- 2. Can you explain the transportation costs, specifically who is getting bus rides in Brookline? Given the zoning of K-8 schools where most students walk, there appear to be no buses at BHS.**

We provide elementary busing for students in K-8 who reside more than 1.5 miles from their zoned school. Four buses are used for this purpose and are funded in the FY25 budget.

- 3. Dr. Guillory mentioned that the \$571,099 increase in private transportation may even be higher based on the bids going out. What does the private transportation item include, and why such a significant increase?**

It includes both regular and Special Education transportation, as well as transportation for students in foster care and those experiencing homelessness.

There is a shortage of drivers and transportation vendor availability, so costs are rising steeply. We are opening bids for Special Education, Foster Care, and Homeless Transportation on March 7, 2024. We hope to stabilize costs by combining these three areas.

While the state reimburses towns for complying with the law by educating students with special needs, to date, it has paid nothing to help transport those students to school. According to a 2010 study by the Massachusetts Special Education Transportation Task Force, the cost of special education transportation grew by 89% from 1995 to 2003, compared to a 50% increase for regular education transportation.

**4. How much deferred maintenance does the Baker School have over the next five years, and where can information about school building maintenance plans be found?**

The deferred maintenance budget includes funding for flooring upgrades, painting, and new stair treads at the side entrance used for recess at the Baker School. The total amount allotted for this work is \$128,000. This summer (2023), flooring in five rooms was replaced, the auditorium/flex room was refurbished, and ten classrooms were painted. Information related to the Capital Subcommittee (School Building Maintenance) is located on our website under [School Committee Meeting Materials](#). Please refer to Capital Subcommittee meetings in July, August, and September.

**5. Please explain the \$291,631 cleaning cost for Driscoll and Pierce. (Pages 22-23).**

Upon further review, the operations team has reduced their request by \$134,000. The remaining increment is associated with the annual increase to the cleaning contract.

## Office of the Superintendent and School Committee

**1. Please break down the salary line of five positions from page 19 and report specific raises from FY24, if applicable.**

Superintendent (New Contract)	\$256,000
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent (New Hire)	\$ 92,000
Communications Specialist (New Hire)	\$ 87,500
Executive Assistant to the School Committee (New Hire)	\$102,843
BEU President (New President)	\$112,544

*Note: Additional benefits (longevity, buybacks, etc.) totaling \$10,203 are also funded in this line.*