

FY 26 Budget FAQs

March 6, 2025

Office of the Superintendent

What is the \$11,300 increase for Education/Training/Conferences?

The line item increase represents a shift in resources from one accounting line to another to track expenditures more accurately. In the superintendent's office, the Professional/Technical services line was reduced by \$35,150, and the education/training/conferences line was increased by \$16,800. It is important to note that the chart on page 20 of the budget book represents both the School Committee and the Superintendent's office.

Why is the education/training/conferences line at the \$50K/year level (is it necessary)?

The education/training/conferences line represents professional memberships in the school committee and superintendent's office as well as professional development experiences for school/district leaders. Given our financial situation, we will scale back those experiences to critical state professional memberships.

Why is the professional staff cost going from \$750 to \$8,897?

This is the proportional share cost of the BEU president's salary. The District and the Union have a shared cost agreement and this portion is tracked in the school committee account.

Can the administrative support positions be reduced from 2.0 to 1.0 FTE? This would result in about \$100K of savings.

One of the administrative support positions supports the Superintendent's office, and one supports the work of the School Committee. Reducing to one position would represent a loss of service and infrastructure to support the wide-scale district operations.

Can we please get a full org chart, possibly as an appendix?

Link to [Organizational Charts](#)

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Office of Teaching and Learning

What are the costs earmarked for the literacy initiative? Is it \$216,450, as mentioned on p. 36, or are there other costs associated with the initiative?

The \$216,450 mentioned on page 36 does NOT represent the cost earmarked for literacy material. The total cost of materials for the literacy program materials is \$375,000. The costs outlined on page 36 include subscriptions for our screening tools, online mathematics, science, and social studies curriculum, and some supplemental student activities for extension. Additional costs are associated with the Literacy roll out related to PD and supplemental materials to teach phonics and phonemic awareness, and to extend this instruction through grade three. We are also offering professional development and creating a literacy leadership team. The costs associated with these aspects of the literacy program total approximately \$131,000.

What is the evidence of the contributions of Senior Directors of Teaching and Learning? What is the total of their two salaries?

The two Senior Directors of Teaching and Learning play an essential role in the Office of Teaching and Learning. Each has a role that is focused on different aspects of the work. The department is currently compliant with all grants. We have created more substantial relationships with partner organizations such as the Brookline Education Foundation, Brookline Adult and Community Education, and Steps Inc.. In addition, we have a robust induction and mentoring program for teachers throughout the first years of their career. We have made a literacy program selection and are collaborating for a strong roll out with our teachers and literacy specialists. In addition, we are developing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for our students K-8. These two roles are complementary and allow the Department of Teaching and Learning to reach the targets set out in the Strategic Plan, most notably under goal 1. The combined salary for these two roles is \$325,770.

Why an increase of \$86,505 for education/training/conferences?

In the Office of Teaching and Learning, there are three main drivers for this increase: adopting and implementing a new K-5 Literacy program, a new social studies curriculum, and exploring a new scope and sequence in middle school science.

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Why are online books, subscriptions, fees rising by \$529,875?

In the Office of Teaching and Learning, the drivers are expanding this line item: the subscription for our Middle School Math program, Desmos, which needs to be renewed this year. We also have a more robust online assessment program to triangulate data and monitor the progress of our students. In addition, a new online resource needed to teach the current middle school science scope and sequence was identified and budgeted for. There is \$42,000 earmarked for our annual subscription to Fish Tank ELA if we expand to grades 6-8.

Why are stipends being allowed to increase by \$193K?

Of the increase, \$100,000 will pay teachers and specialists for time outside of the school day to learn the new literacy curriculum deeply. It will also allow us to provide professional development for our middle school teachers in other content areas. In addition, there are some contractually aligned stipends included in this line. Contractually aligned stipends will increase at the rate assigned in the contract.

What do 7 FTE Paras do in OTL?

These seven paraprofessionals are Steps to Success paraprofessionals who work at the school level supporting our student participants in the Steps to Success program.

Office of Educational Equity

Can the primary METCO grant be used to offset special education expenses for METCO students? If so, how could its allocation be adjusted to absorb those expenses? If not, are there other ways to use the METCO grant that could reduce the overall budget deficit, e.g. increase the number of teachers on the grant?

No, the Public Schools of Brookline fully covers special education services during the school year and in the summer (EYS) for METCO students who are PSB students. DESE would deem this an inappropriate use of the grant. The district can apply for a small amount of supplemental funding to help offset some of these costs after other funding sources are used. \$8300 Per Pupil Rate.

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The grant covers the salaries of four teachers, which total a little over \$400K. *DESE has flagged the application of grant funds to teacher salaries, as METCO is a space availability program with the understanding that teachers are in place. Increasing the number of teachers to the grant would be problematic with DESE.

What is the rationale / justification for adding two METCO Advisors? Please provide a full explanation of funding two new staff through the METCO grant. What would be unfunded in order to create two positions? Does the METCO grant typically cover METCO staff and programming, or is it subsidized? If so, please explain.

METCO Advisors/Liaisons play a crucial role in connecting schools and families. They collaborate closely with teachers, school administrators, families, and other METCO staff to ensure each student possesses the skills and support needed for academic and personal success.

Advisors/Liaisons are actively involved in classrooms from kindergarten through eighth grade, offering hands-on support to METCO and Brookline resident students. They organize lunchtime meetings on academic enrichment, social adjustment, and affinity group development. Furthermore, they work individually with students before and after school and throughout the day, demonstrating their commitment to student growth.

Currently, the program has seven Advisors/Liaisons: one dedicated to BHS and six supporting the eight K-8 schools. Each school—Lincoln, Pierce, Driscoll, and Hayes—has a full-time Advisor/Liaison, while Baker and Runkle share an Advisor/Liaison, as do FRR and Lawrence. With two more Advisors/Liaisons, each school across the district will have a full-time Advisor/Liaison, further enhancing support across all schools.

As noted on page 92 of the budget book, the Brookline METCO Program will no longer sponsor the participation of the HomeBase afterschool program. *This funding will be directed to the two new advisors/Liaisons. The Advisor/Liaison falls in the paraprofessional category with a salary range of approximately \$51,100 - \$60,000 based on years of service for an existing PSB employee and an employee new to the district.

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What do equity leads do? How much are they paid? How is their pay funded? When do they do whatever their work is (during or outside otherwise contracted hours)?

Equity Lead (EL) Role Rational:

The EL role was funded by the Title II Grant in FY25 and will continue for FY26. The stipend for this role is \$2000.

The Equity Lead (EL) role is part of the District Diversity Plan to build capacity across the district. Without a district coaching model where teachers would receive one-to-one support, Equity Leads primarily support schools across the district outside of their contractual time. They sit on school-based equity teams, support staff, assist, and potentially lead staff meetings. Additionally, Equity Leads participate in monthly Equity Lead meetings with OEE leadership and professional development outside the contractual time after school.

What is the rationale for two full-time high-level staff in OEE? What work is being done by OEE staff to impact student achievement directly? (For example, the Assistant Director is a “Faculty Advisor” for a club at BHS—why is that what we pay central office staff to do?)

Office of Educational Equity Rational:

The Public Schools of Brookline have been forward-thinking in their commitment to [Educational Equity](#) by creating the office in 2018. This not only aligns with the [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(DESE\) Vision and Strategic Objectives](#), but it also aligns with the MASS Leads Act that DESE is directed to implement the following: Educator Preparation & Licensure Initiatives, Educator Pipeline/Diversity Research, and Educator K12 Diversity & Professional Development which include:

- District Diversity Plans
- PD on culturally & linguistically Sustaining Practices
- Diversity & Impact Bias Training for District Employees & School Committees
- DEI Officer/Team
- Public Relations Campaign

The OEE has a strong history of identifying and addressing bias, educating staff and students, supporting diverse student populations, recruiting and retaining diverse staff, conducting data analysis and reporting, facilitating dialogue and conflict resolution, and collaborating with community partners. These efforts are ongoing, ensuring the sustainability of our initiatives.

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- Create Surveys and Analyze Data
- School Residencies
- Provide Professional Development to Staff
- Support Building Leadership
- Support Students Across the District
- Recruitment and Retention Collaboration with Human Resources (SECTION G PERSONNEL 2. Recruitment, Selection, and Staffing n. Equity Policy - Staff Recruitment and Retention (Voted 4/27/23; #23-41)

Assistant Director Rational:

Please reference [this document](#) to fully account for the responsibilities of the Assistant Director of Educational Equity. This accounting also provides insight into and delineates the work being done to directly impact student achievement. Please note that all responsibilities highlighted in yellow are additional duties the Assistant Director has taken on and continues to oversee, going far beyond the original job description and demonstrating the dedication and breadth of the responsibilities.

The Assistant Director's role is unique in the central office, as it is both student—and staff-facing. It is a district-level position with a districtwide scope of responsibility. The Assistant Director's direct work with students across multiple schools in the district aligns with and supports the attainment of Goals 1 and 2 of the PSB Strategic Plan and PSB's Mission and Core Values. One example of this work with students is the regular restorative programming the AD facilitates with BHS' ExCel students and faculty.

Why did Education/Training/Conferences rise from \$7K in FY23 to \$42K in FY26?

The former OEE director prepared FY23 and FY24 budgets, and Brookline Education Foundation (BEF) covered much of the training expenses. For example, BEF covered the SEED training for three years. OEE's efforts to continue to build capacity, we planned to have equity leads and up to thirty additional educators and administrators participate in professional development for FY25 and FY26, primarily funded by OEE.

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Office of Student Services

Where did the request for 20.9 FTE; 5.9 Professional Staff and 15 Paraprofessionals come from under OSS? What, exactly, are these positions?

Early in the FY26 budget process, staff were given an opportunity to brainstorm building-based enhancements. The 20.9 FTE requests were proposed for further study and consideration. Within OSS, 12.9 FTE positions are currently delineated for proposed reduction.

What is the rationale/justification for adding a social worker at BHS?

It is not an addition. It is a transfer of the position from a contract position (BMHC, per their request) to a BHS FTE (budget neutral).

For 66 OOD students at the district level, why is OOD tuition rising by \$1,293,567?

The increase in out-of-district costs is based on a combination of historical trends and analysis of student IEPs, resulting in a judgment about how many students may be unable to be served in-district with existing programming and staff.

Please provide more information on the distribution of total special education/OSS costs across all buildings.

Special education (OSS) services (which always translate to costs) are generally not allocated by building. Instead, services are allocated to specific students based on individual needs, mandated by state and federal regulations and laws. In other words, every child is connected to a dollar, and every dollar to a child. Our OSS accounting lines have district-wide and building-based accounts with dollars tracked to specific special education students.

[Elements of Student Services by Location.](#)

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How many teachers could we reduce if we increased caseloads for Special Education teachers taking into account the inherent inefficiencies over the multiple buildings? What would be the savings?

A proposed reduction of 8.0 FTE special educators has been made within the Office of Student Services. To that end, OSS has been studying caseloads across schools, specific to learning center programs that serve students with mild to moderate learning, communication, and executive functioning needs. A staff/student analysis suggests that 8.0 FTE Learning Center Special Educators can be reduced without jeopardizing service delivery and caseload mandates. A small increase in caseload numbers may be expected, but meeting special education mandates will not be impacted. The number of students served period by period may slightly increase, but again, an increase in actual student numbers is projected to be minimal. For clarity, OSS is developing slides that outline specific caseload numbers in learning center programs across our schools.

Are there one-to-one paras and teachers who could be assigned to more than one person? How many paras would be eliminated? What would be the savings?

All decisions for special education students are proposed during the IEP Team meeting. This includes the need for dedicated paraprofessional support as part of the service delivery model. Shared paraprofessional support is always considered, and support must be tied to a specific goal area(s) articulated within the IEP.

What is the evidence of the contributions of Directors of Special Education? What is the total of their four salaries?

During the FY22 school year, a well-respected consultant was hired to complete a review of all special education programs, including analysis of staffing patterns, programs, and services. The framework for analyzing the administrative structure of the department focused on four primary functions of leadership - supporting robust special education and general education relationships, inclusive practices, effective supervision and professional development, and compliance with federal and state regulations. Analysis and data highlighted the need to increase building-based administrative support to ensure consistency in school services and procedures, support to administrators, and staff supervision. Evidence of the contributions can be noted in the stabilization of OOD trends, reduction in PRS and civil rights complaints, and more. The combined salary for these 4 roles is \$562,480.

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What is the evidence that we have taken full advantage of available grants? For example, do we make a full accounting of SPED students and do we take full advantage of the circuit breaker grant?

The cost of special education is substantial. Massachusetts and federal governments provide financial support through four funding sources: Chapter 70, Circuit Breaker, IDEA, and Medicaid. The federal IDEA Entitlement Grant can be used to pay for excess special education services, and the amount a district receives is based on a formula. The state Circuit Breaker program provides additional state funding for students with high cost special education services. Reimbursement is reported each July, covering services in the previous fiscal year. Services must be included in a student's IEP, and administrative and overhead costs are not reimbursable. Finally, Medicaid reimburses certain medical services to eligible students, many of whom also receive special education services. PSB takes advantage of all of these opportunities.

I have a question on the budget reduction recommendation that would "examine teacher/specialist/counselor caseloads" with a proposed reduction of 12.9FTE, saving an estimated \$1,203,590. Which exact positions are being proposed for reduction and what would caseloads (or other measures of student service delivery that you prefer) look like in those buildings compared to other buildings in the district due to the proposed reduction?

OSS has examined special education caseload numbers in learning center programs, which generally serve students with mild to moderate learning disabilities, executive functioning and communication challenges. A staff/student analysis suggests that 8.0 FTE learning center teachers can be reduced without jeopardizing service delivery and caseload mandates. OSS is developing slides that outline specific caseload numbers in all learning center programs across schools. The remaining 4.9 FTE positions include a .4 FTE BHS nursing position (a recent retirement), a .5 FTE Team Facilitator position, and 4 FTE therapeutic positions (the OSS team is currently evaluating psychologist positions who generally focus on mandated testing responsibilities, with smaller caseloads, and other counseling and social worker positions).

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Office of Administration and Finance

Please provide more detail on the \$400K in services/supplies - what exactly is being proposed for cutting?

Click [this link](#) to view the items included in the \$400,000 reduction to the FY26 supplies and services requests.

Please provide more detail on the \$400K in reduction to the Public Building Department budget - what exactly is being reduced from Charlie's proposed FY26 budget?

There are many areas in the building department budget that can be considered when contemplating the reduction. Two of these areas are level funding the school building and maintenance accounts (\$162,000) and lowering the gas utility line by \$238,000. Other potential areas include adjusting the electrical utility account given known savings from the new geothermal system coming online and adjusting the HVAC accounts (either the salary line or the contracted services line).

We are proposing a 9.6% increase over our FY25 allocation. How does that compare historically to our previous requested and actual increases? What percentage of that proposed increase represents contractual obligations, and what proposed increase is the remainder?

Each year there is a gap between revenue allocations and expenses. The process for reducing the budget to fit within the revenue allocated to the schools through the Town/School Partnership agreement, is a public and collaborative process between school district leadership and the School Committee. The public has the opportunity to share their thoughts on the proposed budget at a public hearing on the budget (February 13th) and/or during public comment at school committee meetings. The chart below shows the gap between the initial budget request and the final budget.

Year	Initial Budget		Final Budget	
FY26	149,994,616	9.6%	141,760,032	3.6%
FY25	143,642,989	7.4%	136,847,619	4.7%
FY24	133,730,588		130,704,685	

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The FY26 level service budget is \$147,734,190. There are a few targeted investments included in the FY26 initial budget proposal related to the strategic plan adopted last February and school improvement plans developed by site councils this summer.

[Level Service Budget](#)

[New Requests](#)

[Level Service Cost Drivers](#)

Can you provide a clear and plain description of why PSB faces an unprojected deficit of this size in this budget book?

The primary factors that drive the increase in the budget are employee raises, rising special education costs, and some new targeted investments to improve programming in our schools. There is a table at the top of page 17 of the budget document that provides a high level summary of these cost drivers. Another way to view these cost drivers is presented below.

[Level Service Cost Drivers](#)

[New Requests](#)

Can we state what systemic accounting changes we have made with some detail? Otherwise, it seems that we are providing the same caution from year to year without making needed improvements.

The FY25 and FY26 budget have been created with an eye to implementing a new accounting code structure that meets DESE and Department of Revenue requirements. The new accounting and position control codes were updated in Munis in July. These changes will allow PSB to manage resources in a more transparent and methodical manner. In general, the account codes align with the building-based (cost center) design presented in this document and the DESE chart of accounts. There are still a few areas that we will need to refine to ensure our documentation aligns to these standards with fidelity. For example, nurses that report to a specific school should appear in the school budget while nurses that float between schools should appear in the District OSS budget. In short, the budget has been designed using this standard but Munis is currently reporting all nurses to the District OSS budget. The finance department will continue to make these refinements in the upcoming year. For more information about our improvements see pages 21-24 of the FY26 budget.

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Does the Professional Staff line in Figure 2b-2 include more than the reserve sections? Figure 2b-3 suggests it does not. However, this would mean that 1 FTE = \$126k. Why would 1 FTE have such a high cost? If in fact something else is included under Professional Staff, will you please explain what it is?

There are 8.5 sections being held in the professional salary line in the Office of Administration and finance budget. In addition to these funds, this line also carries reserves for principal salary adjustment, non-aligned staff cost of living adjustments, and sick leave bonuses for BESA union staff.

Why are transportation costs increasing?

OSS transportation costs are rising because we are transporting more students to in-district special education programs and out-of-district schools.

Special Education Transportation	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
In-District	75	70	99	105
Out-of- District	46	59	61	65

For more insight into OSS transportation costs, [click here](#).

Elementary enrollment by school, grade, and section.

Enrollments in Brookline change monthly and at times, daily throughout the year. Below is a snapshot of current enrollment as of March 6, 2025 by school, sections and class size for our K-8 schools. The second document provides insight into the enrollment, sections, and class sizes for FY26.

[Current \(3.6.25\) Enrollment, Sections, and Class Sizes K-8](#)
[FY26 Projected Enrollment, Sections, and Class Sizes K-8](#)

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We are proposing a 9.6% increase over our FY25 allocation. How does that compare historically to our previous requested and actual increases? What percentage of that proposed increase represents contractual obligations, and what proposed increase is the remainder?

[Please see February 26 Finance Committee Presentation 2.26.25](#)

Why are stipends and extra comp time rising by \$464,206?

This is a correction for the under budgeting in FY25 of Athletic Coaches and, K-8 Club Advisor stipends.

What is extra comp? And why is that called structural deficit?

The stipend/extra compensation pays staff for additional assignments, duties, and other after school activities that are outside their standard work hours. This includes compensation for advisors, coaches, curriculum work, etc. The expenditures in this area were not fully known and budgeted in FY25, so have been increased to reflect our actual current activity.

What are the new positions and what does each one cost?

Please see the presentation to the Finance Subcommittee on [March 5 New Requests 3.5.25](#)

Does the miscellaneous salary adjustments line include COLA for nonaligned staff? If so, please provide inputs.

This line also carries reserves for principal salary adjustments, non-aligned salary adjustments and sick leave bonuses for the BESA unit.

We need specific information about unaligned salaries, including proposed (negotiated?) raises.

\$275,000 is set aside for non-aligned salary increases in FY26. AFSCME contracts (BESA, Custodians, Food Service) have not yet been settled for FY25 & FY26 and there are reserves for their potential increases as well.

What savings would be realized by cutting discretionary COLAs for FY26?

\$275,000 is set aside for non-aligned salary increases in FY26.

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Why are summer programs and interns rising by \$61,737?

The Calculus Project and High School Credit Recovery programs were not fully understood and budgeted in FY25. This increase reflects the actual costs of running these programs.

Why are there 6 paras in OAF? (at a FY26 budget line of \$715K) ?

Educational Technology Support Specialist(4), Senior Application Support Specialist(1) and Application Support Specialist(1) positions are part of the Para bargaining unit.

For the 48 custodians, why are we increasing \$234K?

Projection assumes continuation of prior contract terms. Although the Custodial unit has been working without a contract since the beginning of FY25, their prior contract included shift differentials, vacation buyback, longevity, uniform purchases, and uniform maintenance. Individuals are typically hired low on the pay scale, and receive step increases annually until they reach the top of the scale for their particular position. Cost of living increases (COLA) are added on top of the pay scales for all bargaining unit members once their agreement is signed.

Could recruitment and retention, in the HR department, be handled by a single individual?

These positions have played a key role in reducing hiring timelines, enhancing staff retention, and streamlining HR operations. These improvements directly affect the quality of education. On the other hand, decreasing HR capacity during a time when recruitment and retention are particularly challenging could result in increased turnover costs and operational inefficiencies.