



## ***Franklin Public Schools***

*Office of the Superintendent  
355 East Central Street; Suite 3  
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038  
Phone: 508-553-4819*

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To: Franklin School Committee  
From: Sara E. Ahern, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Budget Reductions FY 20 -- REVISED for 4/23/19 Meeting  
Date: April 17, 2019

The School Committee adopted a budget of \$66,826,115 on March 12, 2019, which represents a 5.68% increase over FY 19. The FY20 fiscal forecast, however, does not support this budget and it is anticipated that the School Committee will need to reduce it. Figures available to us at this time project an increased allocation from the Town amounting to \$1,265,000, which represents only a 2% increase over FY 19. This leaves a shortfall of \$2,326,115 based upon the adopted budget.

A series of administrative team meetings and budget subcommittee meetings have occurred within the past few weeks to develop a proposed list of budget cuts (included in the packet), which I reluctantly put forward to the School Committee for consideration. In framing this list, the Administrative Team and Budget Subcommittee applied a framework to consider items that would have the least impact on students in the classroom. This was a very difficult task, given the direct relationship of the school department's budget to a student's classroom experience.

The School Committee will have an opportunity to discuss these items on April 9 and April 23, 2019. I will ask the School Committee to adopt a revised budget on April 23, 2019 that includes budget reductions in advance of the Thursday, April 25, 2019, Finance Committee meeting, being held in advance of the Town Budget Hearing, scheduled for May 22 and May 23, 2019.

The following information provides the Committee with the rationale behind each suggestion.

### **Updated Budget Figures**

#### ***Apply additional revolving funds***

***(\$400,000)***

We have reviewed anticipated expenses for the remainder of FY 19 and estimate that there will be approximately \$400,000 in revolving funds, which can be applied to offset expenses in FY 20.

#### ***Reduce consultants - Special Education***

***(\$49,500)***

The Student Services Department has identified two areas where contracted services may be reduced in the FY 20 year. Additionally, we seek to restructure the responsibilities of the Nurse Leader role and bring these responsibilities within the district.

*Reduce budget based on prior year spending* (\$33,000)

We have reviewed each line in the budget and compared it to expenditures in the prior years. We feel we can make revisions in the budget based on prior years' expenses and anticipated expenses in FY 20. These fall into the categories of crossing guards, cell phones, and attorney fees.

*Adjust Salary Budget* (\$32,905)

We have adjusted projected salary figures based on anticipated expenses in this area of the budget.

**Reduce from Critical Needs Budget**

*Remove curriculum specialists* (\$120,000)

We are suggesting that the Committee remove the addition of 2.0 FTE curriculum specialists from the FY 20 budget. Curriculum development would continue in the district as it has in the past.

*Reduce substitute recruitment strategies* (\$105,000)

We are suggesting the removal of \$105,000 from the \$120,000 for substitutes. The remaining \$15,000 will be applied to the daily substitute rate of \$80/day, which currently falls short of the new Massachusetts minimum wage. Although municipalities are exempt from this new law, we suggest that the committee keep \$15,000 in the budget to bring the daily rate to \$84/day, which is consistent with the new state minimum wage. We feel this will make the positions more fairly compensated and easier to fill.

*Remove Kindergarten Education Support Professionals (6.0 FTE)* (\$150,000)

We reluctantly suggest that the Kindergarten ESPs are removed from the FY 20 budget. The impact of this removal is that instructing students in small groups according to their academic and social-emotional needs will not be as feasible in the earliest years when students' school experiences vary widely and intervention can be most successful for the long-term success.

*Remove addition of Middle School Adjustment Counselor* (\$75,000)

Preliminary information from the consulting DM Group, who is assisting the district with recommendations related to social-emotional learning supports, is that additional staff for our district would be justified. That being said, with a budget cut, we have opted to leave the counseling positions at the elementary level in order to address an equity concern across the six buildings. While the middle schools could use additional counseling support, the greatest need is at the elementary level.

*Remove Franklin High School FTE Additions* (\$240,000)

We suggest that the additional FTEs to support class size reduction at FHS are removed from the budget. The projected enrollment of the high school remains steady -- around 1750

students. This means that there will continue to be multiple sections of 27 or more students in English, mathematics, Spanish, and physical education/wellness.

## **Reduce Services**

### *Discontinue services with DM Group and William James College (\$21,000)*

The FY 20 budget contained funding to support continued consulting and professional development with the DM Group and William James College. Both of these highly credible organizations would have provided support to our staff in implementing and improving upon our SEL interventions and services for students.

### *Reduce professional development and corresponding substitute costs (\$28,000)*

The professional development line is proposed to be reduced by \$20,000. As a result, we will not run a new cohort of Responsive Classroom in FY 20. Additionally, we will not need \$8,000 towards substitutes providing release time for staff attending the multi-day training.

### *Reduce attendance at outside meetings and conferences (\$5,000)*

In order to identify reductions that limit the impact to students within the classroom, the budget will be reduced with less support for faculty and staff to attend outside meetings and conferences at the district's expense.

### *Discontinue Peer Coach Pilot (\$5,000)*

The Peer Coach Pilot is currently in its second year. We have five staff members participating as peer coaches and providing support and professional development to their peers. As a result, they each receive a stipend. We suggest discontinuing the peer coaching program prior to expansion or implementation across the district.

### *Eliminate NESDEC membership fee (\$5,000)*

We pay an annual membership fee to the New England School Development Council. They provide enrollment projections with our membership. They also run some professional development offerings that we have occasionally attended. Members also have access to additional services at reduced cost. Given our limited use of our membership within the past few years, we suggest discontinuing it.

### *Host administrative summer retreat onsite (\$8,000)*

Each year, the administrative team spends high-quality time engaged in team building, professional learning, and planning over the summer. In order to immerse ourselves in this work, we have held this retreat off-site. In recognition of the difficult financial times with which we are faced, the two-day retreat will be held onsite during the summer of FY 20.

### *Reduce materials, licenses, and site-based funds (\$66,100)*

Materials, licenses, and site-based funds are suggested for a reduction in FY 20. We will discontinue the expense of the Brain Pop license after an analysis of usage across the district. Additionally, site-based funds will be reduced by 4%. Each building principal will have discretion over the areas in which reductions may take place. For example, they could choose from among materials and supplies, professional development, and/or copying and printing.

*Reduce number of stipended committee members* (\$10,000)

Without curriculum specialists across the district, we rely heavily on curriculum committees to engage in district-wide work across content areas. In FY 20 we anticipate committees to support Social Studies, Elementary Science, Homework (monitoring), Digital Learning, and SEL. We can not operate in these areas without these committees, however, we will identify ways in which to reduce the membership and therefore the number of stipends of select groups.

## **Reduce Positions**

*Reduce middle school classroom teaching positions* (\$500,000)

We are suggesting a reduction of 10 FTE at the middle school. These reductions will be mitigated for students based on enrollment decreases that the middle schools have experienced within the past several years.

The proposal includes a reduction of 8 faculty members in grades 7 and 8 which restore the use of “split teams” within the district. This means there will be one grade 7 team and one grade 8 team and a team of 4 educators who teach two sections of grade 7 and two sections of grade 8 each. This model was used previously in the district. For students on the split team, they will have the same instructional experience as their peers. However, there is a difference in teaching load for the four teachers on a split team. Based on enrollment numbers, this proposal includes reductions of 4 positions each at Remington Middle School and Annie Sullivan Middle School. With these reductions, class sizes are projected to be within school committee guidelines.

The proposal includes a reduction of 2 grade 6 teachers. This would create “mini-teams” of either 2 or 3 members at Remington and Horace Mann Middle Schools. There is already a mini-team in grade 6 for Annie Sullivan Middle School. Since grade 6 teachers are elementary licensed, they have the ability to teach all content areas. Principals would have the discretion to create 2 3-person mini-teams or a 4-person team and a 2-person team. Based on enrollment projections, a reduction in two positions will keep class sizes within school committee guidelines.

*Reduce middle school special education teaching position* (\$50,000)

Based on the altered team structures through the use of mini-teams and split teams, and in consideration of student learning needs per their Individualized Education Plans, the team proposes a reduction of one middle school special education teaching position.

*Reduce elementary school classroom teaching positions* (\$150,000)

We have done considerable work in analyzing classroom enrollment projections for 2020-2021. We have considered the departure of 98 students to the Charter School, our current K registration numbers, our anticipated K enrollments based on the census, and historical trends of students moving into or out of the Franklin district. As such, we suggest a reduction of 3 elementary teaching positions. This does come with some risk, which we are seeking to mitigate through careful analysis and identification of these positions as enrollment numbers become more certain.

*Reduce physical therapist (PT) assistant* (\$24,080)

The student services department suggests a 0.5 reduction for the physical therapist assistant based on the number of students on the caseload and level of services needed. They will monitor this impact carefully to ensure sufficient services and programming remains to support the students' service minutes per their IEPs.

*Restructure secretarial support (0.4 FTE reduction)* (\$22,000)

The high school suggests restructuring its secretarial support. This would involve the elimination of the student activities account coordinator position, expanding a part-time secretarial position to full-time, and redistributing responsibilities.

## **Raise Revenues**

*Raise transportation fee* (\$61,180)

The cost of transportation has increased within the past ten years, since the transportation fee was last amended. This proposed list includes the addition of \$35 to the transportation fee.

*Add parking fee at Franklin High School* (\$52,500)

Most districts charge between \$100 and \$150, although parking fees of \$300 or more are being assessed. Franklin is one of the few districts in the area without a parking fee, yet, the lots need to be maintained and this comes at a cost to the school department in the form of additional transportation costs, additional fees to game officials, and awards and banners. For perspective, all of our fall and winter sports teams qualified for post-season play in the 2018-2019 school year. This proposal includes the addition of a \$150 parking fee for the 375 spots on the Franklin High School property. Enforcement would be managed by the school department. We will need to reach an agreement with the town that the addition of this fee would ultimately be reflected in the support we would receive from the Town.

*Raise athletic fee* (\$82,850)

The costs of equipment, uniforms, and game officials have increased significantly within the past ten years. Additionally, we are so proud and fortunate that our Franklin sports teams are so successful and have been increasing in their successes in recent years. However, the additional games that are being added on to each season also increase the costs on a regular basis. Under this proposal, the Unified Track and Unified Basketball fees would remain the

same as FY 19, as those sports are new within recent years. This proposal suggests setting the athletic fees as follows (representing a \$50 increase for most sports):

- Track -- \$225
- All other sports -- \$250
- Gymnastics -- \$450
- Hockey -- \$500

### *Raise activity fees*

Our after school activities are thriving at both the high school and at the middle school. The offerings have been expanded over the years and suit a variety of student interests. These activities are supported by stipends to advisors, however the account has not kept up with the demand of clubs and activities. This proposal includes an increase of activity fees by \$25.

### **Returns to the budget**

The budget subcommittee and administrative team are hopeful that the budget picture becomes more favorable further into the spring, as is often the case with the state budget. The house and senate often propose budgets that are more favorable than the Governor's proposed budgets and through reconciliation, Franklin receives additional state aid.

On April 10, 2019, the House issued its preliminary budget, which included a minimum aid increase of \$30 per pupil (\$10 above the Governor's budget of \$20 per pupil) and revised figures for Charter school tuition and Charter reimbursement.

At its recent meeting on Thursday April 11, 2019, the Budget Subcommittee discussed prioritizing the return of FTEs at the high school to support a reduction in class size. The following items are marked with an asterisk in the spreadsheet from previous discussions about returns to the budget with additional funding.

1. Middle school grade 6 teacher (\$50,000) - out of consideration of both class size and students' needs at Horace Mann Middle School, the team advocates adding back one middle school position
2. Kindergarten ESPs (\$150,000) - with a proposal of elementary positions to be cut, they could likely be within kindergarten, depending on the rate of continued enrollment. K ESPs would assist with small group instruction, academic and behavioral interventions, and may assist in mitigating the impact should K positions be eliminated.
3. High School FTEs (\$120,000) -- the Budget Subcommittee has been concerned about the high class sizes at the high school and would recommend including a portion of the requested additional FTEs at FHS in order to support class size reduction in key academic areas including English, mathematics, and Spanish.
4. Middle school adjustment counselor (\$75,000) -- given the anticipated recommendations from the DM group, the continued advocacy for the SEL needs of our students, and the ongoing need of students for support in terms of SEL, the Budget Subcommittee

suggests including the middle school adjustment counselor should more aid become available.

The process was a thoughtful but very difficult one. I wish to express my grave concern about the ongoing fiscal forecast for FY 21 and the possibility of further and more extensive reductions to the school department.