

School Committee Budget Guidelines FY 07

Approved 11/28/05

The Newton Public Schools are committed to developing and supporting an environment where children perform at the highest level. To that end we must take all reasonable steps to provide the staff, materials, supports and physical environment to fulfill that promise. The School Committee recognizes that in tight financial times crafting a budget plan to support our stated mission is exceedingly difficult and requires extra effort to advocate for funding and a careful balancing of available resources and competing priorities.

General Principles

--The FY07 Budget should support and be consistent with the School Committee's strategic Challenge Letter of June, 2004 and the more specific systemwide goals that flowed from that statement as well as with other recognized values and objectives that typify effective teaching and learning, and that maximize the achievement potential for all students.

--All major areas of the budget should be reviewed for possible efficiencies, any redundancies, and opportunities for savings, consistent with our mission and core values.

Process

Our explicit goal is to have an open budget process that allows all interested parties to understand at each step how priorities have been balanced: what has been reviewed; what options have been considered; and, what is the reasoning behind recommendations.

In early January the School Committee will address the bottom line that the Superintendent should use in preparing the budget, based on the Mayor's allocation and expectations about state aid and other sources of funding.

Specific Budget Areas

Class size and Programs--- The goal of reasonable class sizes is to maximize the opportunities for differentiated instruction and for adult/child interaction in classroom at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Our immediate objective is to keep class sizes as close to the target goals as possible.

Elementary – The School Committee affirms the following as target goals for class sizes in the elementary schools: classes of 20 or below for K- Grade 1; and, below 25 for Grades 2 through 5. If class sizes exceed these target goals, we ask the Superintendent to explore ways to utilize existing manpower to manage the numbers, or look at other ideas about how to organize the elementary experience to create smaller ratios of children to adults.

Middle—The School Committee affirms a target goal of 90 students per team in the middle schools. Additionally, in order to increase consistency and ensure equity across middle school programs, and to ascertain possible cost savings, we ask the Superintendent to analyze the effects of the middle school elective program experience.

High School-- The School Committee affirms a target goal of no more than 15% of classes at the high school level at 25 or more students. The School Committee also affirms its commitment to keeping class sizes and programs equitable across the two high schools. Further, we ask the Superintendent to protect the integrity of programs, and to preserve those programs with proven excellence. We also ask the Superintendent to review the balance between the breadth of programming and more favorable class sizes in core subject areas to see whether adjustments are required.

Reserve Teaching Positions—In an effort to maintain maximum flexibility and respond to unanticipated enrollment fluctuations, we ask the Superintendent to include, if at all possible, reserve teaching positions at all levels.

Teachers & Staff— The School Committee affirms the importance of recruiting, retaining, and supporting the faculty and staff of our system whom we recognize as the backbone of our schools.

Special Education --- We ask the Superintendent to continue to explore and determine what additional efficiencies and cost-saving measures can be employed that would provide the same high quality programs and services for students with special needs.

Professional Development --- We ask the Superintendent to review professional development and curriculum development in the light of systemwide goals and recent cuts, and include sufficient funds to support the school system's objectives.

Physical Facilities --- The School Committee affirms the goal of providing a physical environment that is comfortable for students and staff, conducive to learning and teaching, and safe and secure. We ask the Superintendent to consider the effects of several years of deferred maintenance when budgeting the annual dollars necessary to work toward this goal, and to work with city officials to develop school system access to consistent and reliable funding for investment in capital equipment and building repairs that will save on annual operating costs and provide significant payback over time. The long-range facilities planning study that we are commencing should inform the process of intelligently planning for upgrading our facilities.

Administration/Management --- We ask the Superintendent to incorporate appropriate recommendations from the current studies on the organizational structure of our school system administration and on compensation/classification for non-aligned staff.

Technology and Instructional Materials --- We ask the Superintendent to review each responsibility area to identify possible efficiencies and uses of technology that might save

staff time and paperwork, and to provide resources to support the acquisition of textbooks and instructional materials.

Public Engagement --- We ask the Superintendent to include funds for the School Committee to explore new ways of communicating between school constituencies, the extended Newton community and the Committee.