

The Public Schools of Brookline Superintendent's FY2010 Budget Message

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) is considered one of the premier school systems in Massachusetts. Our alumni and staff contribute meaningfully to their communities and in their professional endeavors throughout our nation and the world. Brookline students and graduates compete favorably with their counterparts, as gauged by many standardized measures of achievement, by grade-level competencies, and by placement at and graduation from highly competitive colleges and universities.

The Strategic Plan of The Public Schools of Brookline, recently adopted by the School Committee, provides a catalyst for our future educational endeavors and a blueprint for documenting our system's continued success. Specific goals and strategies for our system and schools are derived from our mission: "To ensure that every student develops the skills and knowledge to pursue a productive and fulfilling life, to participate thoughtfully in a democracy, and succeed in a diverse and evolving global society." Our priorities and definition of success are derived from our four (4) strategic areas of focus:

1. Academic Excellence through Content, Pedagogy and Relationships;
2. Educational Equity;
3. Thriving in a Complex Global Society; and
4. Continuous Improvement using Data

We are committed to a superlative system of service and effectiveness that our residents have every right to expect of their public school system.

Moreover, the Town of Brookline takes pride in a longstanding reputation for the excellence of its public schools, the quality of its teaching and administrative staff, and high levels of community support for education. Recent evidence of the special relationship between our citizens and their schools was provided through the successful override campaign of May, 2008, which has permitted extension of instructional time within the system, and the design and implementation of an elementary world language program offered in kindergarten through grade six at each of our PK-8 schools. The override also alleviated a structural deficit, then impending, that had threatened a significant number of positions and programs in our schools. We sincerely appreciate the level of support provided by the entire Town and accept, as part of this generous support, our obligation to account for our programs and communicate frankly the successes and the challenges for our system.

Unfortunately, the dynamics affecting the world are not under our control. Due to our inability to date to address a number of the structural factors, including health insurance, cited in the override campaign, as well as the current worsening economic climate, there is significant reason to doubt the ability of the Town and School Department to sustain the levels of financial support that have enabled our success. While we are hopeful that, in the future, we can return to service levels currently delivered we must meet our financial burdens by matching our expenses to our revenues. Specifically, the FY2010 budget development process has been complicated by the following state and local revenue and cost factors.

1. Collective Bargaining. The uncertainty caused by the impending end of contractual agreements with our bargaining units complicates the development of our financial plan for the coming year. Although discussions will soon begin with the units represented by the Brookline Educators Union (BEU), we do not anticipate collective bargaining agreements in time to inform the FY2010 budget deliberations.

2. Enrollment. We have experienced significant growth in the K-3 cohort, including the present kindergarten class (555 students), grade one (507 students), grade two (556 students), and grade three (525 students), representing a sizable increase compared to classes entering the system four to six years ago. In addition, our projections for the incoming kindergarten (550 students) would continue this pattern. In order to sustain reasonable class sizes, these enrollments dictate increased staffing requirements, including classroom teachers and specialists, at the elementary level.
3. FY2009 School Department Budget Deficit. At the conclusion of the second quarter for FY2009, we are projecting a \$398,198 spending shortfall due to unpredictable increases in out-of-district (special education) placements and staffing adjustments necessitated by our continued enrollment growth. While it is clear that we are able to reduce some of this deficit through one-time preventative measures, including freezing supply accounts and vacant positions, we believe that a structural shortage of \$170,500 will need to be addressed in our FY2010 spending plan.
4. FY2009 State Budget Reductions. Because of declining state revenues throughout the current fiscal year, Governor Patrick has implemented a series of budget cutbacks that have impacted our school system. In October we saw a decrease in METCO funding of \$115,000, along with a cut to "circuit breaker" (special education) funding of \$75,000. In January, we experienced another reduction in METCO support of approximately \$90,000. These modifications led to a worsening of our FY2009 budget deficit (outlined above), which has been offset by savings realized through health insurance plan changes negotiated and implemented in FY2009.
5. FY2010 House 1 Proposal. Governor Patrick's proposal reduces base state funding (lottery and additional assistance) for Brookline by \$2,255,841, decreases the statutory level of "circuit breaker" funding (from 75% in FY2009 to 70% in FY2010), and proposes the third reduction to METCO that will have been implemented in a nine month period.
6. Grants. A continued loss of grant funding, with a further decline in support anticipated in FY2010, mandates that the school system reshape and/or curtail certain of these important services to our students, which will be particularly challenging in these difficult economic times. In particular, we expect further reduction to "No Child Left Behind" funding, particularly the provisions that provide support for literacy and mathematics specialists in our elementary schools.
7. Health Insurance. As noted in the FY2009 Superintendent's Budget Message, the Override Study Committee (OSC) recommended that the town and schools join the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), the health insurance system for state government employees, as soon as possible. Furthermore the OSC believed that the town would save "between \$1 and \$2 million per year by joining the GIC." In fact, recent bids solicited through our health insurance consultant suggest that Brookline and its employees might have actually saved up to \$4,000,000 if we had entered the state health insurance program for 2009-2010. Instead, given that we have not been able to reach an agreement with the coalition of our employee unions to make this program design change, Brookline will experience a 7.8% increase in health insurance costs over FY2009 for the coming year, representing an increase of \$646,000 in health insurance costs to the Town for the upcoming fiscal year. In addition, for every staff person retiring, the Town incurs a post-retirement health insurance cost (OPEB), which is not currently being fully funded on a current basis and, as a result, continues to generate an ever increasing liability which will need to be accounted for in future operating budgets beyond FY2010.
8. Local Town Receipts. Separate from state aid, the Town is experiencing a reduction in local receipts that reflects the contraction in the economy. This decline includes building permits, the automobile excise tax and interest income. Conversely, the growth revenue

that is allowing Brookline to move forward in FY2010 is the property tax, which is growing at 2.5% on its base. However, beyond this figure, the provision for growth related to new construction has been lowered to \$1.5m, from an original estimate of \$1.7m for FY2010, due to the impact of the broader economic downturn.

9. Retirements. The number of teacher retirements will decline for the second consecutive year in FY2010, meaning that any significant savings derived from the initial year replacement of retirees at lower levels of compensation will not be available in this spending plan.
10. Revolving Accounts. The Adult & Community Education program, Summer School, and Athletics revolving accounts are operating at a loss, necessitating that the system develop plans to address these deficits. In addition, our food service program, while operating on a break-even basis (not including provisions for employee benefits), needs to make up for \$275,000 of losses that occurred in prior years, while sustaining its current relative success. Future plans for these programs may entail significant restructuring of programs, the elimination of specific aspects of these efforts and/or stricter budgetary controls.
11. Salary Steps and Lanes. The substantial number of teacher retirements in the system between 2003 and 2007 has resulted in a professional staff that is, on average, younger and has less teaching experience. In addition to negotiated salary increases, these newer teachers are more likely to experience additional increases associated with steps (years of experience) and lanes (graduate degrees and credits). As a result, the annual salary costs borne by the district are now significantly more than the published negotiated adjustments.
12. Special Education. The costs associated with private placements of our students remain unpredictable on at least two levels. First, although we do make some contingency plans within our spending plan, we cannot plan at all to accommodate students whose families relocate to or from the system because they are under no obligation to communicate with us prior to their arrival or departure. Therefore, we are subject to volatile swings in our budget with respect to the numbers of students placed at any given time. Second, the mechanisms for controlling the cost of private placements, designed and implemented by state officials, have not worked and have led to rapidly accelerating costs for certain of the private schools with which we do business.
13. Uncertainty of Additional State and Federal Revenues. The viability and potential impact of Governor Patrick's proposed state-administered 1% meal and hotel tax, with revenues to be dedicated to cities and towns, is in doubt and, therefore, has not been included in the Brookline FY2010 financial plan. Similarly, while additional revenues may come to the schools through President Obama's proposed Economic Stimulus package, the lack of specifics of the plan at this time, the uncertainty of the amount of funding that may come to school systems, and the proposed short-term nature of the funding makes including these monies in our fiscal plan an imprudent option at this time.

Overall Budget Picture for FY2010

The School Department faces a structural deficit of approximately \$2.0 million for FY2010 after the use of one-time monies. Following is a detailed discussion of this anticipated shortfall comprising both revenue and expenditure issues.

Revenue

- Town-School Partnership Revenue Growth. The partnership, which considers state and local revenue sources, as well as shared expenditures including health insurance and utilities, allocates an increase of \$953,031 to the public schools in the FY2010 plan for growth revenue. Again, this projection does not assume any additional revenue from Governor Patrick's proposal for a 1% meal and hotel tax program.

- Circuit Breaker. As noted earlier in this message, House 1 projects a decrease in this special education funding from the 75% reimbursement assumed in FY2009 to a 70% figure for FY2010. This represents a loss of \$150,000 in available funding to our system for the coming fiscal year.
- METCO. A significant portion of the reduction to METCO funding must be accounted for in this spending plan. Specifically, we will allocate \$146,400 as a loss in revenue against our FY2010 allocation.

Expenditures

- Special Education. We are projecting an increase in the cost of out-of-district placements, as a result of both additional placements and the increased cost for students currently attending private special education schools, of \$600,000 for FY2010. However, we are forecasting a \$105,000 savings based on our initial implementation of new options that will be made available for the delivery of after-school home-based services and play groups for students with specific disabilities and IEPs. Therefore, the total projected net increase to this line is \$495,000 for the coming fiscal year.
- Net Cost of Steps, Lanes, Retirements and Staff Turnover. We anticipate that the cost of step increases for FY2010 will be \$940,000, which represents an increase of more than 2% in salaries for our teacher bargaining unit (Unit A) separate from any negotiated increases. In addition, we estimate lane advancement costs at \$100,000. Finally, the savings realized from retirements and other staff turnover is estimated at \$440,000. Therefore the net cost of this item is estimated at \$600,000.
- Elementary Enrollments. Given our increasing enrollments at grades K-4, we estimate the need for four (4) additional elementary classroom sections in FY2010, primarily in the 4th grade. In addition, we have allocated two (2) FTE for specialists to teach these additional elementary sections of elementary world language, music, art, and physical education. Finally, increases in enrollment at the middle grades will require an additional .50 FTE across Baker, Lawrence and Runkle Schools. The total cost of these enrollment-driven changes is \$406,488.
- Program Improvements. The following items are recommended with a focus on our Strategic Plan, the Program Review process, and our obligation to fulfilling the promise of the FY2009 override effort.
 - *Elementary World Language staffing*. We absorbed approximately \$100,000 for additional staffing in FY2009 that will need to be budgeted appropriately in the FY2010 spending plan. This cost represented two (2) factors: (1) an increase in the FTE required to teach additional sections created due to enrollment growth after the override and after final schedules were completed; and (2) the annualized costs of teachers who were hired after the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.
 - *Mathematics Textbooks and Materials (grades six through eight)*. The purchase of materials to support implementation of our grade six, seven and eight mathematics learning expectations is estimated at a net expense of \$50,000 for FY2010. This figure represents the cost beyond the expense for Think Math! textbooks and other reusable materials purchased in FY2009. In addition, the budget also includes \$42,000 (already factored into the spending plan as an ongoing expense) for the replacement of consumable materials to support our K-5 implementation of Think Math!
 - *Mathematics Previewing Program*. Our strategic plan outlines our goal to "eliminate the achievement gaps with respect to race, ethnicity and socio-economic status and increase the achievement of students with special needs through individualized strategies and programs." We believe that an important strategy in achieving this goal is to "increase the participation of students of color, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students with special needs in advanced classes." The Mathematics Preview Program,

designed to serve students in grades 7-9, will be tailored after successful national models (including a program at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia), and will focus on a review, reinforcement and extension of mathematical concepts and skills that students will need to master in order to ensure success in higher level mathematics courses in high school. The program will include learning opportunities during the summer, before and/or after the school day, and on Saturday, as well as strategies designed to persuade students and parents of the value of taking a challenging course load in mathematics at BHS. The estimated cost of the program is \$25,000.

- *Nursing.* The System is committed to the goals and full implementation of the Enhanced School Health Grant. To meet the needs of this program, we must assume the costs imposed by the “phase-out” of the grant support earmarked for staffing over the remaining life of the grant. This cost is estimated at \$20,000 for FY2010.
- *Restructuring of the Special Education Department.* We believe that the model currently used in administering special education, particularly with respect to the facilitation of IEP team meetings, the coordination of services, response to client concerns, and cost control, can and must be more efficient and effective. Therefore, in the interest of improving these services and achieving long-term savings, we propose implementation of the following steps.
 - o Eliminate the four (4) Unit B Special Education Administrator positions.
 - o Eliminate 1.80 FTE social worker positions.
 - o Eliminate one (1) special education teacher position.
 - o Create seven (7) team facilitator (Unit A) roles which, when added to the one (1) currently existing role, will afford us with the capacity to facilitate meetings at our eight (8) elementary schools. In addition, we would create one (1) team facilitator (Unit A) role responsible for working with our out-of-district student placements, their families, their transportation, and the private schools where they attend.
 - o Create one (1) Director of Special Education position (Unit B), responsible for coordination, training and supervision of these facilitators, along with evaluation of appropriate special education teachers and staff. This individual would be a direct report to the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services.

The total cost of this reorganization is projected at approximately \$120,000 in the FY2010 spending plan.

- Transportation and Custodial Contracts – We presently have agreements with outside vendors for transportation and custodial services. The FY2010 budget allows for up to \$50,000 in possible increased costs associated with these contracts.
- FY2009 Deficit – As noted in the previous section, the shortfall for our current year spending plan (\$170,500) must be accounted for in this FY2010 proposal.
- Collective Bargaining – A 1% salary increase for all employees would require an allocation of \$596,000 in this spending plan. However, given the uncertainty of the economic climate and the severity of our present deficit, the current spending plan does not provide any allocation for collective bargaining.
- Extraordinary Contingency – Given the uncertainty of the Commonwealth's revenues and the proportions that have been allocated by the Governor to funding cities and towns, the present status of health insurance discussions in Brookline, the continued deterioration of the economy which may require even more draconian reductions in state support of education, and the uncertainty of impending collective bargaining with our employee groups, the FY2010 spending plan includes a \$600,000 contingency account to meet extraordinary needs.

Additional Considerations (already included in the FY2010 spending plan)

- Contingencies – As is our normal practice, this budget assumes an additional regular education contingency of \$100,000 in FY2010.
- “One-Time” Funds - We will propose utilizing \$750,000 of one-time monies to support the FY2010 budget, an increase of \$79,125 above that which was used in the FY2009 spending plan. These funds are mainly available through the Circuit Breaker reimbursement program, and will be used specifically to support special education costs within the budget. I am somewhat concerned about this recommendation, given the reduction in the percentage of Circuit Breaker reimbursement which, without appropriate planning, would mean that the availability of our one-time funds will continue to shrink. However, I believe that this action is warranted and that we are making a prudent recommendation for the following reasons: (1) The proposed special education restructuring will, as noted earlier in this message, lead to better service and financial savings, reducing our dependence on these funds over time; and (2) Our restoration and addition plan, which will be implemented if additional state or federal monies become available (as described later in this message), would include, as a top priority, the elimination of \$125,000 in one-time monies from this FY2010 spending plan.

Proposed Budget Reductions and Adjustments

The proposal shown below is designed to close the \$2.0 million budget gap described above. Paring the budget by approximately 2.5% means that some services must be reduced or eliminated. We are, therefore, forced to adapt and change in order to provide the best educational program to the Town with the resources at our command. The proposals outlined here are a compromise, designed to meet the competing imperatives of enhancing the instructional program in Brookline within the constraints of a sharp decline in available funds and the prospect of further reductions in the near future. This proposal does attempt to honor fundamental elements of our strategic plan. At the same time we must modify our financial commitments to initiatives that have been legitimately adopted to foster educational quality and continuous improvement. I deeply regret the necessity of curbing our plans to meet the constraints of our current financial circumstances. It is clear that these proposals will cause pain, but that we must endure in the service to our students and to the citizens of this town. The following proposal represents my best judgment, based on consultation with my leadership team, including Senior Staff, Principals and Coordinators, of the greatest good in line with our joint obligations both to the current citizens and the taxpayers of the next generation.

1. Brookline High School Administration. We propose the elimination of the Assistant Headmaster position, the Coordinator of Pupil Personnel Services role and one (1) guidance counselor role. Instead, the high school staffing would include a Provost (non-aligned) position, along with a Lead Guidance Counselor (Unit A) role. The total savings for this proposal would be \$94,100.
2. Brookline High School Clerical. We propose consolidating 2.50 FTE clerical positions which are open or soon to become open at Brookline High School, through a redefinition of duties within the building consistent with the newly reorganized administrative structure. The savings for this proposal will be \$114,200.
3. Brookline High School Teaching. The slight decrease in enrollments at BHS, along with the creation of a tighter schedule model, will allow us to eliminate 4.60 FTE teaching positions across our high school departments. The savings from this consolidation will be \$283,900. While the specific positions will not be known until we have completed the initial phases of the high school scheduling process, it is clear that we will experience larger class sizes in our elective offerings, as well as seeing fewer elective classes run as part of the 2009-2010 schedule under this plan.

4. Central Administration. This budget incorporates the consolidation of payroll services with the Town Department. In addition, we will eliminate one (1) clerical position in the Human Resources Department and another at the Sperber Education Center. Finally, we will consolidate the two (2) positions currently responsible for substitute teacher hiring and placement functions into one (1) role. The total savings from the elimination and consolidation of these positions is \$196,837.
5. Early Childhood Programs. This spending plan assumes that we will move one (1) of the Early Childhood Administrator (Unit B) positions from the general operating budget to the early education revolving account, thereby saving \$75,000 in FY2010 from the general fund.
6. Early Childhood Tuition Rates. This spending plan imposes a 2% increase to tuition rates for our early education programs, while preserving our approach to the use of a sliding scale and scholarships to ensure that PK students whose families require assistance can nonetheless gain access to our public school offerings.
7. Library Assistants. We propose to eliminate library assistant positions in our elementary schools, representing a budgetary reduction of \$226,557 (including salary and benefits). This cutback eliminates 5.40 FTE from the FY2010 spending plan.
8. Mathematics and Literacy Specialists. The FY2010 budget eliminates 4.25 FTE from mathematics and literacy specialist positions, including the .60 FTE town-wide mathematics specialist role. Furthermore, while the remaining 24 FTE teachers would be apportioned across our schools on a formula-driven basis, the specific ratio of mathematics to literacy specialists in each building will be decided by the building principal and appropriate curriculum coordinators, based on student achievement data and the goals identified in Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) and through the School Improvement Plan. This proposal eliminates \$257,900 for FY2010 compared to FY2009.
9. METCO. Given the severe reductions proposed by Governor Patrick as part of his budget proposal, we have no choice but to make an adjustment to our spending on the METCO program. This spending plan assumes the elimination of one (1) system-wide social worker position at a savings of \$66,400.
10. Paraprofessionals. The FY2010 budget includes the elimination of fifteen (15) paraprofessional positions. This reduction will require Principals and central administration, particularly the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, to work together to maximize student schedules and building-based efforts. In addition, the proposal includes a full-time paraprofessional in each kindergarten class throughout the system in an effort to reduce the number of aides included in student IEPs. Moreover, we expect that the proposed facilitator structure, described in the previous section, will lead to additional long-term savings and increased client satisfaction. This effort is projected to yield a savings of \$372,750 for FY2010 compared to the current year.
11. Steps to Success. The FY2010 spending plan requires the elimination of one (1) advisor position from this program. Clearly, the impact could mean that counselors in schools would need to provide additional services to students previously served through our Steps to Success efforts. The savings achieved through this budget reduction equals \$44,946.
12. Technology Replacement Schedule. We propose the elimination of \$100,000 from our technology replacement schedule, meaning that we will defer the commitment to a five (5) year replacement/renewal program within the school system.
13. Technology Support. We propose the elimination of one (1) technology (help desk) position, at a savings of \$51,641. This budget reduction is made possible because of the work of our technology department to increase our efficiency by centralizing our server functions, while maintaining high quality service delivery to building-based staff for their technology needs.

14. Travel. We will eliminate the \$17,000 earmarked in the operating budget for out-of-state travel to conferences and workshops. As a result, we will be completely dependent on funds from the Brookline Education Foundation and other assistance for attendance at these regional and national meetings.

Restoration and Supplemental Package(s)

I believe the cuts to the FY2010 budget described above represent the most realistic scenario for the fiscal year. However, there is some possibility that Brookline may receive additional revenues compared to this conservative budget proposal. These possibilities include aid to the Town at some level that is increased above our current assumptions that may come from the state and federal level(s) in the next few months. First, as noted earlier in this message, Governor Patrick has proposed a 1% meal and hotel tax, to be dedicated to cities and towns. This plan could generate approximately \$450,000 for our public school system, assuming current levels of economic activity. In addition, the federal stimulus package, currently being discussed in Washington by the Senate and House, might conceivably generate additional revenues in special education funding. It is worth cautioning that federal stimulus funds will likely be restricted for disbursement over a limited time, only over the next 27 months, so any use of such funds will have to anticipate their short-lived reliability. Although final recommendations will be formulated when and if these funds become available, and in accordance with any restrictions imposed by the eventual funding program, our priorities for restoration and addition would include the following program and staffing issues.

- Reduce “one-time” funds allocated to the FY2010 Budget from \$750,000 to \$625,000, a lessening of our dependency on these funds by \$125,000.
- Establish funding to support School Improvement Plans, the implementation of Strategic Plan initiatives, and data-driven initiatives at the building-level. Funding for this proposal could be set as high as \$300,000 for FY2010.
- Restore (and increase slightly) formulas for Mathematics and Literacy Specialists by 5.0 FTE. The total cost of this proposal is \$305,500.
- Restore the one (1) Steps to Success advisor eliminated in this spending plan at a cost of \$44,946.
- Restore the one (1) METCO Social Worker eliminated in the FY2010 budget at a cost of \$66,400, if the reduction to METCO funding proposed in House 1 is restored.
- Restore \$100,000 to the Technology Replacement Schedule, thereby reinstating the five year replacement plan.
- Implement the grade seven Health course proposed through Program Review in 2006-2007. This proposal would require one (1) additional FTE and would cost \$67,000 (including salary, benefits and materials).
- Increase our allocation to after-school programs by \$12,377, from \$62,623 to \$75,000.

Efficiencies

Beyond this present town-wide effort to find means of reducing financial costs in a responsible fashion, it is important to note that the School Department has achieved over \$800,000 in efficiencies over the past five (5) budget cycles, many in partnership with town officials. Each of these changes represents a modification in the way that the schools deliver services. They were not all easy or obvious. All have required the cooperation and ingenuity of our employees, some were enabled by improvements in technology and economies of scale, and some represent sacrifices in service to our clients – the people of the Town. The specific initiatives are as follows:

▪ Payroll Office Consolidation (FY2009)	\$ 62,500
▪ Library Assistant Consolidation (FY2008)	\$ 18,200
▪ Modification of Advertising Strategies (FY2008)	\$ 25,000
▪ Teaching & Learning Clerical Consolidation (FY2008)	\$ 55,300
▪ Transportation/Custodial Clerical Consolidation (FY2008)	\$ 47,300
▪ Eliminate One (1) School Bus (FY2008)	\$ 53,100
▪ Eliminate One (1) Bus Monitor Position (FY2008)	\$ 17,327
▪ Eliminate Practice of Hiring Retirees (FY2008)	\$ 100,954
▪ Eliminate Permanent Building Substitute Positions (FY2008)	\$ 58,400
▪ Replace Three (3) Custodial Positions w/Contract Services (FY2008)	\$ 21,900
▪ Eliminate One (1) School Bus (FY2007)	\$ 52,200
▪ Eliminate One (1) Bus Monitor Position (FY2007)	\$ 16,526
▪ Replace Four (4) Custodial Positions w/Contract Service (FY2007)	\$ 27,200
▪ Consolidate Coordinator Positions (FY2007) (<i>Educational Technology and Library</i>)	\$ 81,800
▪ Reduce Technical Support Staff (FY2007) (<i>Applications Manager and Webmaster</i>)	\$ 117,600
▪ Eliminate One (1) School Bus (FY2005)	\$ 52,560
▪ Eliminate One (1) Bus Monitor Position (FY2005)	\$ 15,234

In addition, the School Committee and Administration actively participated in the Town-wide Efficiency Review undertaken on the initiative of the Selectmen. The Public Schools of Brookline recognizes the importance of careful review of our fiscal commitments and support an open process for the Community. The System is committed to finding sustainable actions to support high quality school initiatives in the future. This community demonstrated an impressive commitment to the schools by voting for a significant infusion of additional resources through the Override last spring. Our reciprocal responsibility is to use these resources in the most responsible manner. Our participation in the Efficiency Review is an indicator of our support for this process. The School Committee and Administration were ably represented by Alan Morse in this process. He has reported the interim findings to our body and brought the school administration into the process to ensure the appropriate review of our administrative and support services. We thank him for those efforts.

As we move forward through our FY2010 budget development process the School Committee will work with the Superintendent and Senior Staff to review and analyze all aspects of our programs and services. Part of this review will be our own rigorous assessment of our administrative and support services – including areas already examined by the Efficiency Committee. The largest part of this review will focus on the allocation of resources appropriate to address our programs and services in the context of our Strategic Plan, our ten (10) year Facilities Master Plan, and our multi-year Program Review initiatives. This is our core business and it is our inalienable responsibility under law.

In addition, the School Committee Chair, Dr. Henry Warren, has announced to the School Committee his intention to form an *ad hoc* Strategic Investment Committee to advise the School Committee on three (3) major issues:

1. the completion of the strategic plan and our school system's need to ensure resources are allocated to advance our priorities;

2. the current economic crisis and unprecedented pressure that has put a focus on finding efficiencies in our school budget; and
3. the new facilities master plan and implications for our physical plant for the next generation.

Dr. Warren has appointed Susan Wolf Ditzkoff (Chair), Judy Meyers and Alan Morse to this Committee, which will also include volunteer citizen members. Further, he has charged the group with completing this charge and issuing a report by December, 2009, that can help advise and inform the creation of the budget guidelines for our FY2011 spending plan.

Conclusion

The final FY2010 spending plan for The Public Schools of Brookline must represent a balance between the aggressive educational agenda put forward in our Strategic Plan and the present financial realities. For example, we have proposed a model to facilitate special education team meetings and client services which will be more accountable to school officials and families and help to reduce costs over time. Moreover, our plan to implement full-time paraprofessionals in each kindergarten class signals our intention to improve services for all students and provide an appropriate educational program for students with special needs, while reducing the number of aides designated in student IEPs. Despite the fact that we will eliminate jobs in the coming fiscal year, I believe that this proposal strikes the appropriate equilibrium necessary for advancing the mission of The Public Schools of Brookline.

Given the forecast of difficult budget years in (at least) FY2011 and FY2012, it is clear that The Public Schools of Brookline must examine and implement alternative ways of doing business. One example would be the creation of a citizen volunteer program at our schools. Our approach should be to actively solicit individuals to fill support roles, which in the past may have been filled by employees, in an effort to maintain our focus on teachers, students and the classroom. Another idea would involve pushing the limits on our goal of reducing paper and simplifying access to materials – student progress reports, report cards, employee payroll checks – through on-line parent and employee portals. We must aggressively investigate and, when appropriate, implement these types of programs in order to maximize resources and to maintain our outstanding service to students.

We look forward to the opportunity to provide elected officials, appointed representatives, and the community with additional rationale for these critical proposals over the next few months.