

WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



PROPOSED FY'22 OPERATING BUDGET EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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AND THE ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, AND STAFF
OF THE WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

January 29, 2021

Dear Westwood School Committee and Westwood Residents,

I am pleased to present to you an Executive Summary of the *FY'22 Superintendent's Recommended Budget*. This document provides an overview of the budget and insight into how budget decisions are made. In addition to this summary, all of our detailed budget documents and spreadsheets are available to the public on the district website. We provide this information so that our community can be confident that our budget ensures a high-quality educational experience for students, while also maintaining a sense of financial responsibility and stewardship for the town's resources.

It is a challenging time for all of us, and for schools in particular, as we navigate our way through the uncharted waters of a pandemic. Last spring, when Gov. Baker abruptly closed schools, the WPS quickly pivoted to a remote learning model. When it became apparent that the duration of the pandemic would be longer than we had imagined, teams of educators spent the summer creating a reopening plan that responded to feedback from parents and students, aligned with guidelines from public health officials, and created a viable instructional model while also keeping the community safe.

While nothing about this pandemic has been ideal, the students, educators, administrators, and parents in Westwood have demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt and persevere in an uncertain and changing landscape. Westwood was one of the only districts in the state to provide in-person Extended School Year summer programming in July and August for our highest need special education students. We are proud that, unlike many districts, our fall hybrid model leveraged our technology resources and teachers' skills to provide live, synchronous instruction via video conferencing so that students access high quality instruction on their at-home school days. From the first day of school in September, our hybrid model provided for in-school attendance 4 days per week for our youngest learners in preschool, kindergarten, and grade 1 and for our high needs special education students. Subsequently, we have been able to increase in-school attendance to 4 days per week for grades 2, 3, and 4. Finally, while many districts' plans for fully remote students rely on online learning platforms or virtual academies, Westwood's fully remote students are attending classes with their Westwood peers and are taught by our own WPS teachers. With the benefit of hindsight, and with knowledge now that we didn't have while planning in August, there are, of course, many things we would do differently. With that said, I'm grateful to everyone who has worked so hard to keep our values and mission as a district in the forefront and stayed focused on what is most important.

The pandemic and this year's very different learning model was also challenging from a budgetary perspective. The reality of the year has been very different than what we planned for during the FY'21 budget process. We made difficult decisions in the summer to reallocate budget resources so that we could respond flexibly to unanticipated needs. Fortunately, the state also provided an additional \$225/student for COVID-related expenses, such as PPE, enhanced cleaning supplies, and technology. Most notably, our municipal partners worked closely with the School Department and provided the

schools with significant support through the town's CARES Act allocation for unforeseen expenses due to COVID. As a result, the district is on track to weather FY'21 without having to take any further action to stabilize or close the budget year.

As we look to the 2021-2022 school year with cautious optimism, we have developed the FY'22 budget on the assumption that students will attend school fully in-person once again. The budget request for FY'22 represents a modest 3.4% increase over FY'21. When developing the budget, we focused on what the district will need in FY'22 to recover and stabilize. Given the turmoil of the last year, we know that there will be an increased need for academic intervention and support as we assess and address potential learning gaps. We also recognize that the pandemic and disrupted school has been hard for students emotionally and that the transition back to fully in-person school will require robust mental health support. The FY'22 budget reflects the resources that the district believes will be important as we engage in this recovery period. In addition, part of the recovery process will also include a return to some of the other long-term strategic priorities that have necessarily taken a back seat for the last 12 months.

Finally, even as we have worked through the uncertainty of the last year, the district has continued to keep our eyes on the future and continue planning for some significant capital needs in our elementary schools. We have continued to work in collaboration with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) on a Hanlon-Deerfield building project. That project is on course to receive partial reimbursement from the Commonwealth if Westwood residents approve funding for the project. While working to advance the Hanlon-Deerfield project, the School Committee also commissioned a high-level design study so that it can determine the best plan for the Sheehan School.

After 28 live-streamed School Building Committee meetings and 4 community forums since last January, the Hanlon-Deerfield project is nearing the end of schematic design. While we have benefitted from residents' engagement in virtual forums, we recognize that COVID has impacted our ability to interact with as many residents as possible to educate the community about the project and answer questions. This building project represents a very important investment in the future of the district and the town. As such, the School Committee and School Building Committee have decided to postpone the full project funding vote to a Town Meeting in Fall 2021 so that we can ensure the community has the opportunity to fully understand the project and participate in the process. At Town Meeting this spring, the School Department will be asking residents to approve borrowing for a relatively small portion of the total project cost (no more than \$1.7M) to continue to fund the design development until the fall. This "bridge funding" does not increase the overall project cost. If funded, the full project funding vote will be decreased by the amount of the bridge funding. Please stay tuned for more detailed information about the building project status.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this budget or any other school related matter. I can be reached by email at eparks@westwood.k12.ma.us or by phone at 781-326-7500 x1341. As always, I am grateful for the support of the community as we all work together to provide students with the first-rate educational experience that they deserve. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Emily J. Parks
Superintendent of Schools

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is the FY'22 School Department budget request?	4
What are the major budget categories?	5
What are the changes to the budget – FY'21 to FY'22?	6
How do enrollment trends impact the proposed FY'22 budget?	8
What are the proposed staffing changes related to program needs and strategic priorities?	9
What are the budget priorities in Special Education?	13
How will the district continue to pursue strategic priorities while also recovering from the pandemic?	14
What are the non-salary budget changes in General Education and Operations?	15
How does Westwood's per pupil spending compare to other districts?	16
What priorities do we anticipate in upcoming budget cycles?	17
Is this the final FY'22 budget? What could change?	18

WHAT IS THE FY'22 SCHOOL DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST?

As the table below illustrates, our recommended budget for FY'22 totals \$50 million which represents a 3.4% increase over FY'21.

FY'21 Final Budget ¹	48,347,500
Proposed FY'21 Budget	50,003,345
Increase (\$)	1,655,845
Increase (%)	3.4%

The FY'22 budget proposal is consistent with the last few years of relatively modest budget requests and builds upon the strong foundation created by the larger budget increases in FY'16 and FY'17 made possible by the new growth revenue from the University Station development. The School Department has managed its operating budget within Proposition 2 ½ without the need for an operational override since FY'08.

WPS Operating Budget Increases						
FY'16	FY'17	FY'18	FY'19	FY'20	FY'21	Proposed FY'22
5.4%	6.0%	3.3%	3.4%	3.5%	3.6%	3.4%



¹ Includes the incorporation of FY'20 Chapter 70 education state aid increase that was voted at Town Meeting.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR BUDGET CATEGORIES?

The following table² breaks down the total budget into five categories. As is evident, in school budgets, **salaries** are by far the greatest budget driver. In the proposed FY'22 budget, salaries account for 86% of the overall budget and correspondingly comprise most of the proposed budget increase. This budget proposes a strategic reallocation of, and investment in, professional positions and support staff and an increase in contracted services (reflected in the Non-Salary, Special Education category) in order to address student needs as we emerge from a period of disruption due to the pandemic.

Major Budget Category	FY'21 Budget	Proposed FY'22 Budget	Incremental Change (\$)	Incremental Change (%)
Total Salaries	42,089,348	43,371,359	1,282,011	3.0%
Non-Salary				
Special Education	1,043,457	1,242,828	199,371	19.1%
Utilities	1,207,000	1,200,000	(7,000)	(0.6%)
Operations and Maintenance	993,335	1,020,335	27,000	2.7%
All other non-salary	3,014,360	3,168,823	154,463	5.1%
TOTAL	48,347,500	50,003,345	1,655,845	3.4%



² The table above represents town funds, exclusive of revolving funds or grants.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES TO THE BUDGET - FY'21 TO FY'22?

The following chart outlines the progression from the FY'21 Budget to the FY'22 Recommended Budget. It shows how the budget is “built.” This year’s budget proposal involves a significant reallocation of positions based on our analysis of the district’s priorities and areas of student need.

Budget Request			FTE Net Change	FY'22 Proposed Budget Components
FY'21 Budget				\$48,347,500
Increase salaries for existing personnel (contractual) ³				\$1,262,011
Faculty/Professional Position Additions			7.9 FTE	\$628,000
Add: 3.0 FTE Elementary General Education	3.0 FTE	\$225,000		
Add: 1.0 FTE TMS Math Specialist/Interventionist	1.0 FTE	\$75,000		
Add: 1.0 FTE TMS Special Education (Social Emotional Program)	1.0 FTE	\$75,000		
Add: .4 FTE TMS Department Head	.4 FTE	\$48,000		
Add: 1.2 FTE Elementary Math Specialist	1.2 FTE	\$95,000		
Add: .3 FTE Psychologist (Hanlon)	.3 FTE	\$35,000		
Add: 1.0 FTE Psychologist (Districtwide)	1.0 FTE	\$75,000		
Faculty/Professional Position Reductions				
Reduce: 1.6 FTE HS English Language Arts	(1.6 FTE)	(\$74,500)		
Reduce: 1.0 FTE HS Social Studies	(1.0 FTE)	(\$69,000)		
Reduce: 1.0 FTE HS Science	(1.0 FTE)	(\$80,500)		
Reduce: .4 FTE Director of Safety and Security ⁴	(.4 FTE)	(\$40,000)		
Reduce: 1.0 FTE HS Foreign Language	(1.0 FTE)	(\$65,000)		
Reduce: 1.0 FTE HS Electives	(1.0 FTE)	(\$79,500)		

³ Includes the incorporation of 4.0 FTE ABA Tutors added during FY'21 to support students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in FY 2020-2021.

⁴ Though this position was budgeted for in FY'21, the funding was reallocated to teaching staff as part of the district's pandemic response. The position has never been filled.

Reduce: 1.0 FTE TMS Teacher	(1.0 FTE)	(\$110,000)		
Reduce: .4 FTE Library Director	(.4 FTE)	(\$48,000)		
Reduce: 1.6 FTE Library	(1.6 FTE)	(\$188,000)		
			(9.0 FTE)	(\$754,500)
Support Staff Positions				
Add: 2.0 FTE HS Academic Support ⁵	2.0 FTE	\$52,700		
Add: Elementary General Education IA Support (10 @ 6 hr/week)	1.9 FTE equivalent	\$53,800		
Add: 1.0 FTE Custodian (.5 FTE TMS, .5 FTE District)	1.0 FTE	\$40,000		
			4.9 FTE	\$146,500
Net increase to various non-salary accounts				
Includes:				
- Anticipated SPED out of district placements and 3% tuition increase - Increase in SPED contracted services - Escalation in SPED and Regular transportation costs, increase of late bus service, and adjustment in transportation offsets - Increase in software subscriptions and project-based learning budget - Funds for PPE and sanitizing needs				
				\$373,834
Total Change			3.8 FTE	\$1,655,845
FY'22 Superintendent's Recommended Budget				\$50,003,345

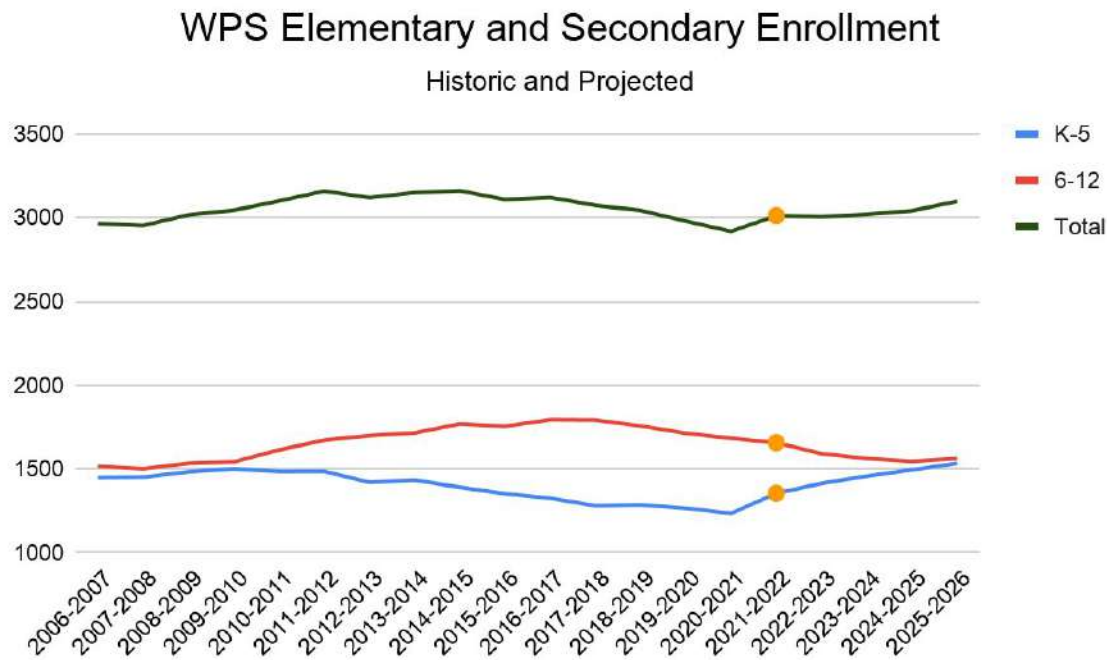


⁵ The true All Funds cost is \$72,700, but one of the positions is partially funded by an increase in the METCO grant.

HOW DO ENROLLMENT TRENDS IMPACT THE PROPOSED FY'22 BUDGET?

Enrollment Trends

During the budget process we look at enrollment trends and make predictions not only for next year’s budget, but for the next several years, with a particular focus on how our student population is distributed across the levels:



As shown above, during the last several years, there have been shifts in the population of students at each level in the district. In recent budget cycles, we have reallocated and added staff to account for these shifts in enrollment. For several years, as enrollment increased at the middle school and high school, the District increased staff in those buildings. After the middle school enrollment peaked and began to decline, in FY’20 we were able to make incremental staffing reductions at Thurston.

The high school enrollment reached its crest in 2018-2019 and has started to decline. While we did not propose significant reductions in high school staff in the FY’21 budget, the District made the decision at the end of June to eliminate or reallocate 5.4 FTE teaching positions at the high school (as well as a more limited number of staff at other levels) as part of our budget strategy to reopen school in a different model and respond to a myriad of unanticipated costs resulting from the pandemic (e.g. the need to staff fully remote classrooms, very small class sizes in Kindergarten and grade 1 to enable in-person learning for our youngest students, etc.). As part of the FY’22 budget development, we analyzed the impact of those reductions on high school class size and program offerings and carefully considered the efficacy of restoring positions that we anticipate cutting again in the near-future, in light of the high school’s declining enrollment next year and beyond. We concluded that most of the cuts are sustainable given our enrollment numbers, recent trends in students’ elective choices, and when considered relative to other staffing priorities. The FY’22 budget memorializes those cuts. As articulated later in this document, those positions will be reallocated in the budget to address other staffing needs.

WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED STAFFING CHANGES RELATED TO PROGRAM NEEDS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES?

As we developed the FY'22 budget, we focused primarily on addressing the impact, both academically and emotionally, of a school year disrupted by the pandemic. As such, we have carefully considered how we can assess student needs and then provide intervention and support over the next couple of school years. We are fortunate that in recent budget years we made significant investment in positions that speak to these needs, such as additional guidance counselors at both WHS and TMS, a PreK-8 Social Emotional Learning Coordinator, a literacy specialist at TMS, and department leadership at the middle school to oversee both curriculum and intervention work. However, additional staffing will be needed. Most of the positions proposed below reflect this focus on recovery and stabilization and are aligned with the district's ongoing priorities to ensure a healthy and supported school community.

While these immediate needs are at the top of the priority list, in FY'22, the District also wants to return to some of the longer-term strategic work that it was engaged in prior to the school closure in Spring, 2020. In particular, we intend to:

- Reinstate programs like J-Term that focus on authentic, meaningful learning;
- Restart the ongoing curriculum review cycle by beginning the Math and completing the implementation of the Social Studies and Wellness curriculum reviews and
- Strategically expand and implement our diversity, equity, and integration goals

In FY'22, we are proposing the addition of several positions. Many of these positions represent a reallocation of staff from other areas.

3.0 FTE Elementary General Education Teachers: \$225,000

Every year, the District budgets with the intention of keeping elementary class sizes within the School Committee's established class size guidelines or providing additional support in classrooms that exceed the guideline. In FY'22, we have committed to staying within guidelines as an important strategy for "tier one" academic intervention (targeted instruction provided within the classroom itself by the teacher, a content specialist, or a general support person). Given the small size of our elementary schools, it is often challenging to achieve these targets. The addition or reduction of just a few students at a grade

The FY'22 budget re-allocates or adds positions that support our recovery and stabilization and address the impact of the pandemic on our students. The budget requests prioritize support of students' learning needs and mental health:

- Small elementary class sizes
- Increased psychologist staffing
- Increased staffing for academic intervention

level in a particular school can change the number of class sections required to keep class sizes aligned with the School Committee's class size guidelines. We are often faced with enrollment projections that allow for either one large class section or two class sections considerably under the School Committee's class size guideline. In developing this year's budget, when faced with that choice, we have opted for the latter, understanding that it will require an investment of resources. While very small class sizes aren't sustainable in the long-term, we believe it is an appropriate short-term intervention strategy.

1.2 FTE Elementary Math Specialists: \$95,000

Math is a content area where we expect to see more impact from the disruptions related to the pandemic. In our elementary grades, students develop foundational numeracy skills that set the stage of their later success with math that requires abstract reasoning and the capacity to translate real world situations into mathematical terms. We anticipate that some of our students will have skill gaps that need addressing. This staffing addition allows us to increase math specialist time at all of our larger elementary schools (Downey, Martha Jones and Sheehan). Specialists will provide both “push in” support, working alongside teachers in class to support students who are struggling with current content, and “pull out” interventions for students who have gaps with prerequisite skills. Our specialists also play a critical coaching role: they support both new and veteran teachers in providing high quality math instruction.

1.9 FTE Elementary General Education Instruction Assistant Support: \$53,800

In order to provide additional support for literacy and math intervention, the kindergarten assistant positions that have focused on providing hands-on help in our K classes will expand, both in terms of hours and responsibility. The assistants will be able to work across classrooms as needed, not just in kindergarten, and hours will match typical instructional assistant hours so that we can provide interventions and support through the day.

1.0 FTE Middle School Math Specialist/Interventionist: \$75,000

This request parallels the request for increased math intervention time at the elementary level. During the middle school years, students develop proportional thinking and algebraic problem solving skills that are vital to their success with math in high school and beyond. Working under the direction of the math department head, the interventionist will help support students whose skills gaps interfere with their efforts to master grade level content.

0.4 FTE Middle School Department Head: \$48,000

For two years, TMS has had 0.8 Department Heads for Math/Science and ELA/Social Studies. While both supervision/evaluation of curriculum development and instruction have been priorities, development of a more robust intervention and support model has been identified as a need for TMS across both departments. While the addition of interventionists is part of this plan, those staff will be focused on working directly with students. The addition of 0.2 FTE to both the ELA/Social Department Head and the Math/Science Department Head would create two full-time leadership positions that not only oversee curriculum and instruction, but also manage assessment and intervention programming. The Department Heads will take on the responsibilities of training staff, scheduling assessments, analyzing results, identifying students for programming, and tracking student progress. The goal is to create a continuation of services that mirrors the model in the elementary schools. There is also a need to begin to focus more closely in the area of Social Studies to support the work needed for the new 8th Grade MCAS requirements: in addition to requiring that all students complete a hands on Civics project in grade 8, DESE is piloting a more traditional assessment this year.

1.0 FTE Middle School Special Education: \$75,000

As part of a layered mental health infrastructure, the District has built and maintains a strand of comprehensive therapeutic programming K - 12 (the STAR program serving K-5, the TLC program across grades 6-8, and the FLEX program supporting grades 9 - 12). These programs enroll approximately 50 students across the grades and provide important in-district capacity for immediate response and support. During the FY'21 budget process, the District was able to create two classrooms for the elementary STAR program, allowing for additional students to be served (9 this year/15 next year). Similarly, the WHS program, FLEX, has been staffed for many years by two special education teachers

across the more than 20 students in that program. Those teachers share the academic and therapeutic responsibilities and each have a caseload of approximately 10 - 12 students.

The request for the FY'22 budget is to make a similar investment in the TLC program at the middle school. It is currently staffed with one full time special education teacher, IAs and support from the building adjustment counselor and school psychologist. Next year, the program is anticipated to start with 15 students grades 6 - 8 and is expected to receive referrals throughout the school year. The requested additional 1.0 FTE special education teacher would team with the existing teacher to provide support to a caseload of students as well as provide additional capacity for newly referred students. It is anticipated that, as part of a comprehensive COVID response strategy, there may be additional referrals to the WPS therapeutic programs in the 2021- 2022 school year. This additional staffing would allow for students to remain in the district and not experience additional disruption to their school year, maintaining important relationships with teachers and peers in the Thurston community.

1.3 FTE Psychologist: \$110,000

Looking ahead to the return to full time instruction in school for the Fall of 2021, the District anticipates increased needs for mental health and social emotional support. An additional .3 FTE would bring the Hanlon School psychologist to full-time, ensuring the presence of full time highly-qualified mental health staff in all of our schools.

In addition, the District's COVID recovery strategy includes adding 1.0 FTE school psychologist to be shared District-wide. The District has worked collaboratively with families to meet our special education and Section 504 requirements during the Spring of 2019 and throughout the 2020 - 2021 school year. However, we anticipate that additional referrals to special education, new requests for accommodations, increased need for behavior support planning and additional family support will continue to exist for FY'22 as students and families re-engage with full time in-person schooling. The 1.0 FTE additional school psychologist position will be utilized to provide evaluation and testing support across WPS. With that resource in place, the evaluation and testing load of our school-based psychologists will be lessened, so that they can focus their professional expertise on in-school counseling, whole class social emotional support, and faculty and community outreach. Our intention is to have our school-based psychologists, who know students and families best, be able to provide this support. We anticipate that this additional psychologist staffing would be short term in nature and have a limited time frame of 1 - 2 school years.

2.0 FTE High School Academic Support: \$52,700

At Westwood High School, two additional Academic Advisor positions will be dedicated to providing academic support and intervention. The first position would oversee the Academic Support Class (ASC), the high school's general education academic support program. Historically, ASC has been staffed piecemeal as part of the teacher supervisory duty structure. With changes in the learning model this year, the high school was able to assign one staff member to implement the program. We learned that having one dedicated ASC supervisor provided continuity in student and family support, access, and communication that was lacking in the previous model. In addition, creating a dedicated ASC position, rather than using the duty structure, will result in more teacher time available for substantive content-specific assistance, such as expanded Math Seminar and Writing Lab supports.

The second academic support person will provide targeted, boots-on-the-ground interventions for Boston-resident students, who have experienced significant academic and social disruptions during the pandemic, by establishing a full-time high school METCO academic advisor that parallels the model already in place at the middle school. This will create a more consistent 6-12 METCO student experience.

In addition, with an individual dedicated to working directly with students, it will increase the METCO Director's ability to serve on the district's Administrative Council, guide the district's diversity, equity and integration work and support the potential expansion of the METCO program to the elementary grades in the near future. We anticipate that approximately half of this position can be funded by an increase in Westwood's METCO grant allotment.

1.0 FTE Custodian: \$40,000

This year brought renewed attention to the cleaning protocols in our buildings, as we set out to disinfect and protect our students and staff. We anticipate continued vigilance as well as heavier demands on our staff when we are no longer in a hybrid model. At Thurston Middle School, we have identified a need for additional staffing to complete the daily and weekly cleaning. We are therefore adding a 0.5 FTE custodian at Thurston Middle School and another 0.5 FTE custodian to cover custodial absences and leaves at our other buildings. We have identified savings and efficiencies in the Operations department in non-salary lines in order to offset the majority of this cost. Currently, our staff pick up 4-hour overtime shifts to cover for absences. Therefore, the 0.5 FTE custodian may lead to a corresponding reduction of hours in overtime staffing.



WHAT ARE THE BUDGET PRIORITIES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?

The Westwood Public Schools is committed to meeting the needs of all of our learners in an inclusive setting. As a public school, we are legally mandated to provide a certain level of service to students with special needs, as defined in a student's Individualized Education Plan or "IEP." When students' needs change, the budget also changes. This interdependent relationship between a) legally mandated services, b) student needs, and c) school budgets means that forecasting special education expenses presents a particular challenge for school administrators. As a result, special education is the most variable of all school department budget items. We analyze student needs both as part of the budget process, and also on an on-going basis throughout the school year.

Over the last decade, the District has created several district-wide programs for students with special education needs. These programs enable us to educate almost all of our students in-district. In FY'21, less than 1% of our student population attended school in out-of-district, tuition-based special education placements. This ability to educate almost all of our students in-district aligns with our desire to have students attend school in their community. It is also the most cost-effective strategy for educating students when their needs can be met in-district.

In addition to staffing requests articulated in the prior section, in the proposed FY'22 budget, we have budgeted for tuition and transportation for known/anticipated special education students, including contractual transportation increases and a 3% escalation for tuitions:

	FY'21	FY'22	Difference
Residential Tuition	\$246,440	\$244,892	(\$1,548)
Day Tuition	\$579,678	\$407,890	(\$171,788)
Collaborative Tuition	\$523,754	\$793,732	\$269,978
Out-of-District SPED Transportation	\$408,194	\$420,439	\$12,245
In-District SPED Transportation	\$318,733	\$328,294	\$9,561
Total	\$2,076,799	2,195,247	\$118,448

Finally, the District maintains a line for the purchase of "contract services" in special education. These vendors typically provide specialized services and consultation (required in students' Individualized Education Plans) in areas that the WPS does not employ in-district staff (eg. Braille instruction). The contracted services line also provides hiring flexibility to the district. For example, since the start of the pandemic last spring, staff providing additional support in nursing, general education academic support, and special education areas were hired for the short term as contracted employees to help the district ramp up and then staff down efficiently.

The contracted services line item has been historically underfunded. A multi-year look back suggests that the District can expect approximately \$500,000 annually for the provision of specialized contracted services. Contracted services are currently funded from two sources: District budget funds of \$83,165 and grant funds of \$127,035 for a total of \$210,200, leaving a significant shortfall.

The request of an additional \$85,000 for this year's budget is intended to initiate a four-year structured adjustment of this line. This strategy is similar to the approach the District used to eliminate the kindergarten tuition fee and related budget offset. Having implemented the plan to eliminate the kindergarten tuition in FY'21, the timing is appropriate to turn our attention to contracted services.

HOW WILL THE DISTRICT CONTINUE TO PURSUE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES WHILE ALSO RECOVERING FROM THE PANDEMIC?

The Westwood Public Schools continue to pursue our core mission of preparing students for college, career, and civic life by providing a rich and challenging curriculum, high-quality instruction, and authentic educational experiences. The proposed FY'22 budget reflects not only a focus on recovery from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic but also a return to strategic priorities that support the district's mission.

As in earlier budget proposals, most of the district's resources will be allocated to staffing. With nearly 600 employees, salaries comprise about 86% of the annual operating budget and many of the proposed increases represent the district's analysis of what it will take to maintain the same learning opportunities that students have experienced in previous years.

WPS Strategy for District Improvement Objectives
Meaningful Learning Experiences
Coherent, Connected Curriculum
Healthy and Supported School Community
Facilities for the Future

The FY'22 proposal also supports improvement by continuing to set aside funding focused on curriculum, instruction and professional development. In the year ahead, for example, curriculum alignment funding will support the integration of student-led civics projects into our Social Studies curriculum as well as the implementation of recommendations from the district's Pre-K - 12 Wellness Review, and professional development funding will support ongoing training for Westwood teachers in culturally responsive and antiracist pedagogies and strategies for supporting SEL instruction.

WHAT ARE THE NON-SALARY BUDGET CHANGES IN GENERAL EDUCATION AND OPERATIONS?

Increase in Project-Based Learning: \$10,000

Currently, the project-based learning budget funds J-Term, an innovative end-of-year program for high school students. The district funding for the first two years of J-term was supplemented by grant funds, and an increase is needed in order to keep the program operational in the years ahead.

Software Subscriptions: \$25,000

In order to support intervention efforts in grades K - 8, WPS is looking to expand the investment in online platforms that make it easy to quickly assess student progress and plan for next steps in terms of instruction and intervention. In addition, the district has identified some key social studies and literacy resources that can support students in all grades. Finally, the cost of several online subscription based services is projected to increase next year.

Increase Summer Academic Support Programs: \$4,500

Recent 8th grade math assessment data has helped identify a cohort of approximately 24 students who would benefit from additional math instruction and support as they transition to the high school. In addition, proactive summer programming provided by content-area and special education teachers for rising 9th graders in core content areas (e.g., Algebra, Biology) and executive functioning skills will also strengthen students' connectedness to the high school community and increase students' high school readiness. The funding investment here supplements an existing budget that is typically used for MCAS tutoring, and allows the district to offer a 9th grade Summer Academy.

Increase in Regular Transportation: \$25,400

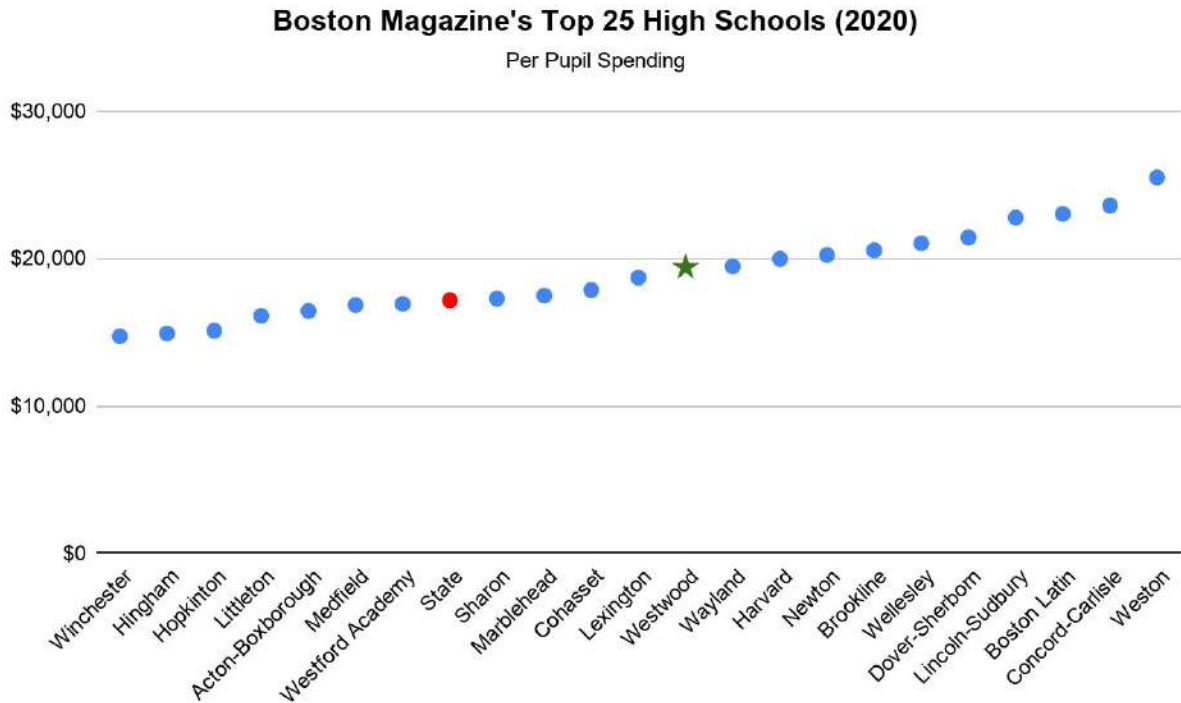
Our budget addresses cost increases contained in our bus company contract. In FY'22 we will be in the 5th year of a 5-year contract with our yellow bus operator, Connolly Bus Company, and we are budgeting for the appropriate contractual increase in the bus cost. While we have had predictable transportation costs in recent years, we have also benefited from an increase in Westwood's METCO grant allotment, about \$18,000 of which will fund additional late buses for students traveling to Boston. Finally, in addition to the contractual increase and expansion of late bus service, we have re-balanced our transportation budget to adjust the offsets from other funding sources such as kindergarten tuition which was used to pay for transportation in prior years.

Increase in Operations for PPE and Sanitizing Supplies: \$50,000

At this time, we have an inventory of personal protective equipment (PPE), hand sanitizer, filters, cleaning supplies, and disinfectant. While the need for some supplies may decline by September, we plan to maintain the rate of change on our HVAC filters next year. We also recognize that it may be necessary to continue the use of electrostatic disinfecting and maintain the availability of PPE for our staff in the coming school year. We have budgeted modestly for these three areas based on assessment of recent usage. Rather than increase our operating budget more significantly, we are setting aside this \$50,000 with the understanding that any bigger unanticipated needs may also be covered by future state or federal funding or other mitigation measures.

HOW DOES WESTWOOD'S PER PUPIL SPENDING COMPARE TO OTHER DISTRICTS?

The chart below compares the per pupil spending in Westwood to spending in the districts that appear on *Boston Magazine's* "top 25" high schools list for 2020. The data presented is from the MA Department of Education website and reflects FY'19 spending, the most recent data that is available.



As illustrated above:

- The state-average per pupil expenditure is \$17,149.
- The mean per pupil expenditure for districts on this list is \$19,046.
- The median per pupil expenditure for the districts on this list is \$19,033.

Westwood's per pupil expenditure of \$19,378 is generally on par with or below other high-performing districts and suggests that the Westwood Public Schools continue to provide a good value for the community's investment.

WHAT PRIORITIES DO WE ANTICIPATE IN UPCOMING BUDGET CYCLES?

Every year, cost center leaders submit both short-term and long-term budget requests. The district leadership team (central office administrators, principals, and assistant principals) meets to review and discuss all of the requests and to reach consensus about the upcoming year's priorities, PreK-12, based on district goals and initiatives. It's important to understand that this budget was developed by identifying priorities, making choices, and deferring some items for future budget discussions. This year's focus is on recovery, stabilization, and mitigating the impact of the pandemic. However, there are other important needs that the district is planning for in the near-future. Some of these items include:

- **Increase English Language Learner (ELL) staffing:** This position responds to student needs and increased regulatory demands
- **Hire a Director of Safety and Security:** This position had previously been identified as a priority and, in fact, was included in the FY'21 budget, but ultimately went unfilled as funds were re-allocated to address needs during the pandemic. While it continues to be a priority, in this year's budget discussion we felt that the most significant student safety issue is around mental health support. We have, therefore, prioritized increased psychologist staffing for FY'22.
- **Expand Westwood's METCO program to the elementary level:** Westwood is a committed METCO member district and currently welcomes new students from Boston starting in middle school. Expanding to the elementary grades supports the district's larger goals of celebrating diversity, pursuing equity and promoting integration in all grades. As a frame of reference, 31 out of 33 METCO member districts start their programming in Kindergarten. The proposed FY'22 budget lays the groundwork for the expansion in two ways. First, by adding an academic support position at the high school so that the METCO Director's time can be focused on program oversight and district leadership, as is common in K-12 METCO districts. Second, the increased elementary general education staffing, if retained in FY'23, could provide an opportunity to welcome 18-30 new elementary students while keeping class sizes low. While METCO is funded through a state grant program based on a per pupil formula, the grant is applied in arrears. An expansion will involve an upfront commitment of approximately \$110K for year one costs associated with transportation and support.
- **Creation of an additional Preschool classroom:** The current three Preschool classrooms meet the needs of 45 students each year. There are required ratios for each classroom from the state that limit the number of students with and without disabilities who can be accommodated in each room. The Westwood Integrated Preschool is a sought after option for parents of children ages 3 and 4 and, this year, the program is fully enrolled. An additional classroom would require both appropriate space and staffing (1 full time preschool/special education teacher and 2 Instructional Assistants - approximately \$135K). While the District supports enlarging the Preschool, it is likely that the costs would not be covered by the tuition generated and a second location in another building would need to be identified. Given the importance of maintaining low class size at the five elementary schools as part of the District's COVID recovery approach for 2021- 2022, another preschool classroom is not feasible at this time.

**IS THIS THE FINAL FY'22 BUDGET?
WHAT COULD CHANGE?**

The presentation of the Superintendent's Recommended Budget is only the first step in the budget process. The School Committee will review the budget, hold a public budget hearing, and deliberate. Through that process, the School Committee could make changes, modifications, or additions. In addition, during the budget process, the School Department will work collaboratively with the Select Board and the Finance Commission to see how the School Department's request fits into the overall Town budget.

Thank you for your continued support of the Westwood Public Schools!