

WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



PROPOSED FY'23 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 13, 2022

Dear Westwood School Committee and Westwood Residents,

I am pleased to present to you an Executive Summary of the *FY'23 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 the 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.

Last January, when I presented the proposed budget for the current school year, we were looking to 2021-2022 with cautious optimism that students would attend school fully in-person once again. In fact, by April 2021, the WPS returned students to full in-person learning successfully. With the challenges of the pandemic, last year was one of the most difficult years that the community has experienced. Fortunately, the community's consistent investment in its schools over time helped to create a district that could weather turbulent times and still provide a high quality education for children. With everyone pulling together last year and supporting each other – parents, students, educators, and community members – we were able to ensure that students learned even in an unprecedented context. Though we will be working through the many impacts of the pandemic for some time, our students did well. On last spring's MCAS exam, Westwood's grades 3 - 8 scores in aggregate ranked 7th in all of Massachusetts for English language arts and 15th in Massachusetts for math. Our grade 5 scores on the Science, Technology and Engineering assessment ranked 6th in the state. While MCAS scores dropped significantly statewide, in Westwood, our MCAS scores were quite comparable to our students' pre-pandemic performance in ELA. While we saw some decline in math scores, the changes were generally much smaller than what happened statewide. For the grade levels or student subgroups where we saw a larger gap, we are able to use this assessment data, as well as internal data, to address student learning needs and move forward.

The FY'22 budget was designed to start the recovery and stabilization process. We have begun that process, while unfortunately also continuing to navigate the challenges and disruption of the pandemic. In July and August, based on student assessment data from the spring, the District ran its largest ever Extended School Year program for Special Education students. In addition, we implemented general education academic intervention summer programming for identified students at all levels to bolster skills and position students well for the fall. Given the scope and cost of the programs, in the fall, the District applied for a state grant to assist us with partial funding for these programs. I'm pleased to report that we were notified in December that we will be able to retroactively apply approximately \$200K in grant funding to offset the cost of these summer programs. This is great news going into the FY'23 budget process as it will assist us in closing the current fiscal year without having to significantly rely on our Special Education Reserve account. Having a robust Special Education Reserve factors heavily into our assessment of financial risk going into FY'23 and our ability to respond appropriately to unplanned Special Education needs that may arise.

In developing the FY'23 budget, we have continued to keep in mind our strategic priorities as well as needs that were identified in prior budgets but were not able to be addressed. For example, in FY'22, we

were only able to partially fund the Director of Safety and Security position. The FY'23 budget proposal looks to fully fund that position. As we conclude the Social Studies curriculum review and align to the state's curriculum frameworks in History and Social Science, we are requesting a part-time teacher to facilitate the implementation of the new high school civics requirement. Finally, over the last several years, Westwood has committed to honoring diversity, pursuing equity, and promoting integration through strategic priorities for the district. Related to those priorities, the District recently applied for and was granted funds for two purposes: 1) A grant (approx. \$67K) to increase efforts to recruit, hire, and retain a talented and diverse workforce. 2) A significant increase in our METCO grant allocation (approx. \$250K) to expand our long-standing METCO program to the elementary level. While the talent diversification grant is one-time funding, the increase in our METCO grant includes both funding for planning and preparation this school year and an ongoing increase to annually offset the transportation and staffing costs for a larger program. It also allows us to reframe the work of the current METCO Director to a broader Director of Equity and Community Partnerships role.

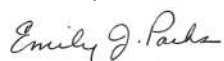
Halfway through FY'22, the challenges of the pandemic persist. Moreover, we understand more clearly that the process of assessing and addressing potential learning gaps and supporting students emotionally will continue for some time. A combination of increased specialist staffing and the restructuring of schedules at the secondary level has positioned us well to provide academic intervention to support students with learning gaps. In particular, in the FY'22 budget, we prioritized elementary general education teacher positions in order to keep our elementary classes small. Our current general education staffing is sufficient to support reasonable class sizes next year, and therefore, the proposed budget maintains all current general education teaching positions.

The bulk of the proposed FY'23 budget requests are in the realm of Student Services, most notably in providing an adjustment counselor at the high school and a Dean of Students position at the middle school. Though we have been able to add additional psychologist and counseling staff in the last two budget cycles, these FY'23 budget requests reflect our assessment of current student needs based on input from our teachers, counseling staff, parents, and administrators, as well as Social Emotional Learning assessment data, student surveys, discipline and attendance data, and trends in student mental health needs. We are also proposing to allocate the entire \$170K that the District received in federal ESSER III grant funding to increase counseling support at the elementary level for the next 2 school years. The pandemic has affected all of us in ways that we may not yet fully understand, and we want to do our best as a community to support our students during an unprecedented time.

Finally, the District is very appreciative of residents' overwhelming support of the Hanlon-Deerfield Elementary Building Project at the Fall Town Meeting. Moving forward with this generational project is an enormous step in addressing the District's long-term facilities needs and represents an exciting vision of education for Westwood's students.

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 x1340. More than ever, in this challenging landscape, 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

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WHAT IS THE FY'23 SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST?

As the table below illustrates, our recommended budget for FY'23 totals \$51.8 million which represents a 3.5% increase over FY'22.

FY'22 Final Budget	50,012,588
Proposed FY'23 Budget	51,762,397
Increase (\$)	1,749,809
Increase (%)	3.5%

Though the needs in FY'23 are unique, the proposed increase in the FY'23 budget proposal is consistent with what the District has requested over the last several years. 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	FY'22	FY'23
5.4%	6.0%	3.3%	3.4%	3.5%	3.6%	3.4%	3.5%



WHAT FACTORS ARE CONSIDERED WHEN DETERMINING THE BUDGET PRIORITIES?

The Westwood Public Schools is committed to providing a wonderful educational experience for all of the students we serve. When developing the budget, there are several issues that we consider to ensure that how we spend our resources is a reflection of the community's priorities and what we value.

First, we assess our contractual salary obligations and other fixed costs, such as transportation and utilities. We know that students' daily experience is most powerfully influenced by the quality and skill of the teachers they work with in the classroom. The WPS budget, like all school districts, is primarily about people. With over 600 employees, salaries comprise 85% of our annual operating budget.

Second, we consider shifts in enrollment and maintaining reasonable class sizes. While enrollment shifts can be a significant driver in school budgets, for the reasons discussed further below, it is not a significant driver for the FY'23 budget.

Third, we consider current student needs. In developing the FY'23 budget, we focused heavily on addressing the impact, both academically and emotionally, of the pandemic. Most of the positions proposed for FY'23 reflect this focus on recovery and stabilization and are aligned with the district's ongoing priorities to ensure a healthy and supported school community.

Finally, and importantly, we reflect on the priorities articulated in the [WPS Strategy for District Improvement](#) to make sure that the budget requests align with our stated goals. For this reason, you will see that the proposed budget continues to advocate for robust line items related to curriculum, instruction, and professional development. Though the proposed budget includes virtually no increase in the Curriculum and Instruction cost center, within the existing level of funding we have made strategic decisions about how to allocate the funds in FY'23 in order to meet student needs and work toward educational goals. For example, we have prioritized the purchase of updated, recently published middle school math materials that are better aligned with the current state curriculum standards than what was available at the time of our last materials adoption. Next year, we will be reviewing and purchasing core elementary social studies materials, particularly for grades 3-5, to ensure consistency of instruction across classrooms. And, we will continue to provide ongoing professional development for teachers about ways to integrate social emotional learning into existing curricular content and into classroom structures and routines.

The *WPS Strategy for District Improvement* is posted on the home page of the District's website:
www.westwood.k12.ma.us

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR BUDGET CATEGORIES?

The following table¹ 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'23 budget, salaries account for 85% of the overall budget and correspondingly comprise most of the proposed budget increase. Embedded within our budget is a proposed increase in budgeted salaries of about 3.7%, of which nearly \$450K is attributed to new positions, fully detailed in the next section of this Executive Summary, and the remainder is for contractual adjustments for existing personnel.

This year, we are also using over \$800K of our Special Education IDEA² Grant to pay for salaries rather than non-salary expenses. This was a strategic decision that was discussed with the School Committee and allowed us to potentially increase our Medicaid reimbursement. As a result of this change, a corresponding amount in Town funds will be used to pay for non-salary expenses, rather than salaries. The table below represents the changes in five major budget categories from FY'22 to FY'23. The columns on the right demonstrate the impact of this offset change with the IDEA Grant in particular. This year's unusually small increase in Town funds budgeted for salaries is explained primarily by this change in the Offset.

Major Budget Category	Voted FY'22 Budget	Proposed FY'23 Budget	Incremental Change (\$) before adjusting for IDEA Grant	Incremental Change (\$) after adjusting for IDEA Grant
Total Salaries	43,392,352	44,177,983	1,630,134	785,631
Non-Salary				
Special Education	1,242,828	2,074,331	(13,000)	831,503
Utilities	1,200,000	1,200,000	0	0
Facilities & Maintenance	1,020,335	970,335	(50,000)	(50,000)
All other non-salary	3,157,073	3,339,748	182,675	182,675
TOTAL	50,012,588	51,762,397	1,749,809	1,749,809

¹ The table above represents town funds, exclusive of revolving funds or grants.

² IDEA refers to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES TO THE BUDGET - FY'22 TO FY'23?

The following chart outlines the progression from the FY'22 Budget to the FY'23 Recommended Budget. It shows how the budget is “built.” In the pages that follow the chart, each item is explained in more detail.

Budget Request		FTE ³ Net Change	FY'23 Proposed Budget Components
FY'22 Budget			\$50,012,588
Net increase in Town budget for salaries for existing personnel (contractual) ⁴			\$326,225
<i>Faculty/Professional Position Additions:</i>			
1.2 Elementary Adjustment Counselors	ESSER III ⁵ funds (no operating impact)	3.8 FTE	\$215,000
1.0 FTE HS Adjustment Counselor	\$75,000		
1.0 FTE MS Dean of Students	\$90,000		
.4 FTE HS Social Studies Teacher	\$30,000		
.2 FTE Increase Director of Safety and Security (adjust.2 FTE to .4 FTE)	\$20,000		
<i>Support Staff Positions:</i>			
2.0 FTE Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Tutors	\$90,000	7.5 FTE	\$233,648
2.0 FTE SPED Instructional Assistants	\$54,000		
1.0 FTE Special Education Building Substitute (Downey)	\$25,000		

³ Full-Time Equivalent

⁴ This change is net of over \$800,000 in reduced salaries for existing personnel due to changes in offsets, including a change in the Special Education IDEA grant. The full scope of offset salaries impact is summarized in the Offsets Exhibit. This figure also includes the incorporation of 1.8FTE instructional aide staff added during FY'22 to support students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in FY 2021-2022.

⁵ Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (federal funds related to pandemic recovery)

.5 FTE HS Specialized Program Transition Coach	\$30,000		
.5 FTE Administrative Assistant for Facilities Department	\$32,500		
.5 FTE Administrative Assistant for Business Office	Revolving accounts (no operating impact)		
1.0 FTE METCO Advisor (Elementary)	METCO funds (no operating impact)		
Other staffing adjustments (Freshman Orientation, ESY ⁶ Administrative Assistant, technology support specialist, IS salary offset)	\$2,148		
Net increase to various non-salary accounts			\$69,682
Net increase to non-salary line due to impacts of changes to Offsets and Grants or transfers. ⁷			\$905,254
Total Change		FTE	11.3
FY'23 Superintendent's Recommended Budget			\$51,762,397



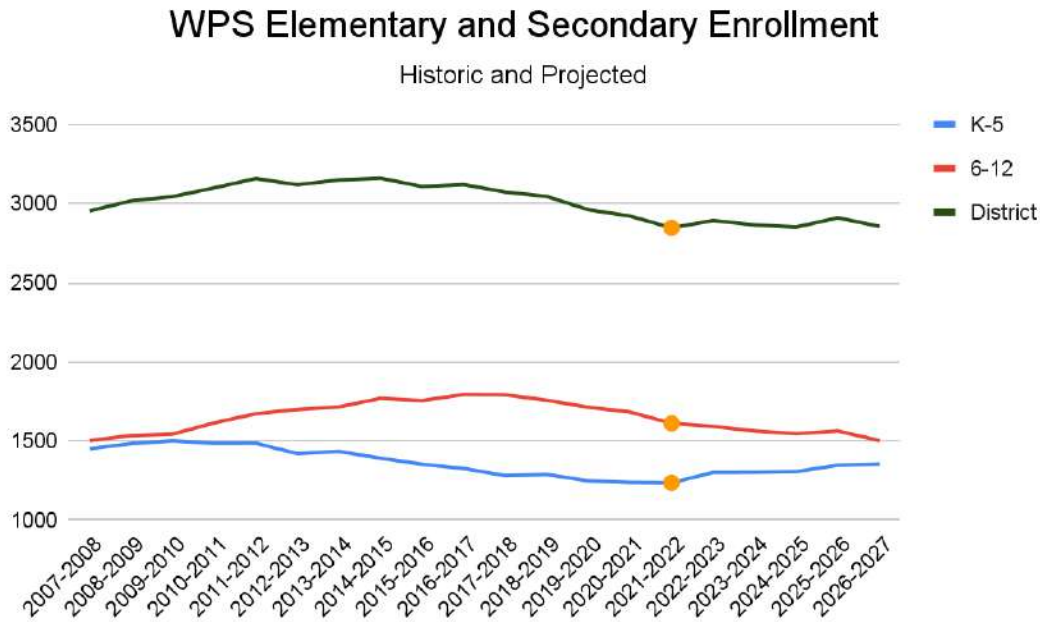
⁶ ESY = special education Extended School Year program

⁷ This change is an accounting change that counterbalances the change in the salary line footnoted above, due to changes in offsets, including change in the Special Education IDEA grant.

HOW DO ENROLLMENT TRENDS IMPACT THE PROPOSED FY'23 BUDGET?

Enrollment Trends

During the budget process we look at enrollment trends 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. Over the last several 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. The middle school enrollment peaked in FY'18 and began to decline. In FY'20 the enrollment had declined significantly enough to begin making incremental staffing reductions at Thurston. The high school enrollment reached its crest in FY'19 and started a gradual decline in FY'21 that suggested incremental reductions would be possible within a couple of years. The original FY'21 budget did not include significant reductions of high school staff. However, in June 2020 during the state shut down, the District made the decision to eliminate or reallocate 5.4 FTE teaching positions at the high school as part of our budget strategy to respond to a myriad of unanticipated costs resulting from the pandemic and to reopen school in a different model that required significantly more resources at the elementary level. Subsequently, 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 given the projected decline in high school enrollment. We concluded that most of the cuts were sustainable given our enrollment numbers, recent trends in students' elective choices, and when considered relative to other staffing priorities. As a result, rather than restore the positions that would likely be eliminated shortly thereafter, we memorialized the cuts in the FY'22 budget. The last three budget cycles, therefore, have already adjusted for the secondary enrollment trends, and **the FY'23 budget maintains current secondary general education staffing levels.**

One of our top priorities after the disrupted 2020-2021 school year was to keep elementary class sizes small. During the FY'22 budget process, the elementary enrollment that we could “see” for the 2021-2022 school year (i.e. students currently in classrooms and incoming kindergarteners identified through census data) was not as high as our enrollment projections. However, we speculated that the enrollment number would grow over the summer and increased elementary general education staffing by 3.0 FTEs in the FY'22 budget to ensure that we would be able to respond to enrollment changes and stay within the School Committee’s class size guidelines. This decision turned out to be important, as there was a tremendous amount of movement in and out of the district over the summer. As seen in the table below, enrollment changes resulted in a net increase of 39 students at the elementary level.

FY'22 Elementary Enrollment Difference Between Projected and Actual	
Kindergarten	20
Grade 1	8
Grade 2	9
Grade 3	-1
Grade 4	0
Grade 5	3
Total	39

More significantly, half of this increase was in kindergarten. Fortunately, our elementary staffing levels were sufficient to absorb new students and add a K/1 classroom at Downey (the school that experienced the largest increase in enrollment).

The FY'23 budget proposes no changes in elementary general education staffing levels. We continue to prioritize favorable elementary class sizes as part of our recovery from the disruption of the pandemic. The elementary enrollment is projected to increase over the next several years. However, given our current favorable class sizes (average = 17.8), we believe that the current staffing levels can absorb an increase for FY'23. In light of last year’s experience with kindergarten registration and movement at other grade levels, determinations about staff allocation at each school will be made later in the spring.

During upcoming budget cycles, our enrollment and staffing analysis will consider the impact of consolidating Hanlon and Deerfield and efficiencies that may be realized in FY'25.

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

In FY'23, we are proposing the addition of several positions. The positions are detailed below:

1.0 FTE High School Adjustment Counselor: \$75,000

The High School leadership team prioritized the addition of counseling support as a continued response to the long term impacts of pandemic related disruptions. The counseling needs for students entering

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

Grade 9 are consistently higher than for students in Grades 10-12, and recommendations for direct counseling from TMS are increasing as guidance counselors and the adjustment counselor at TMS are providing more support and advocating for continued services. We anticipate the pandemic will continue to exacerbate this need for several years.

Additional counseling staff for both special and general education students will help the High School provide more consistent and comprehensive short and long-term counseling support for students. S-Block provides unique opportunities for direct instruction in executive functioning, emotional self-regulation, and self-advocacy, as well as specialized group instruction for new and at-risk students. This additional staffing not only responds to current needs but allows the High School to maximize the support that S-Block and the new schedule can provide to students. (*Strategic Priority 2: Healthy and Supported School Community*)

1.2 FTE Elementary Adjustment Counselors: \$85,000 (Funded with ESSER III pandemic relief funds)

Elementary Principals prioritized the addition of counseling supports as a continued response to the long term impacts of pandemic related disruptions. The five elementary schools have historically been staffed with full time psychologists (Hanlon was increased in FY'22) even though the building populations are quite small. This approach has worked well in the last decade as it provided highly qualified clinical and testing staffing in each building across the day and week. In response to the pandemic, the principals of the three largest elementary schools have consolidated their highest priority budget request and advocated together for Adjustment Counselor staffing. This budget request will allow for the creation of three part time Adjustment Counselor roles at the three largest elementary schools: Downey, Martha Jones and Sheehan. Each school would gain a .4 FTE Adjustment Counselor as a member of the Student Services department. This new staff would work approximately 14 hours each week and be scheduled by the Principal to provide counseling support to students across the school population. As the school psychologist staffing at the two smaller elementary schools, Deerfield and Hanlon, far exceeds national norms, it is anticipated that those two schools can continue to provide needed counseling support via the full time school psychologist already located in each building. Hanlon and Deerfield continue to collaborate and share clinical resources as we

Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) is federal funding to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on the nation's students. ESSER III is the third (and presumably final) installment of this funding. The amount of ESSER funding a district receives is tied to the Title I formula, which assesses the proportion of students in a district who are economically disadvantaged. The WPS received \$170K in ESSER III funding.

move towards consolidation in 2024 and due to their physical proximity. *(Strategic Priority 2: Healthy and Supported School Community)*

1.0 FTE Middle School Dean of Students: \$90,000

After a review of attendance, discipline and administrative data in the fall of this year, the Middle School administrative team has prioritized the addition of a Dean of Students as their most critical budget request. With a population of 667, Thurston Middle School is currently staffed by a Principal and Assistant Principal. This staffing model no longer matches the presenting needs of the students and families at Thurston. In line with the success of the High School Dean of Students position over the last decade, this role at the Middle School will allow for proactive and positive responses to student behavioral needs, assist in the investigation and resolution of reported incidents, and allow the Principal to maintain focus on academic and instructional initiatives and mandates. *(Strategic Priority 2: Healthy and Supported School Community)*

.4 FTE High School Social Studies Teacher: \$30,000

In order to enhance students' ability to engage in real-world problem-solving, as well as meet the recent state mandate (An Act to Promote and Enhance Civic Engagement) for authentic civic action in high schools, the Social Studies Department proposes an expansion of our current required course offerings to include the opportunity for each student to learn about issues facing their community, research their root causes, and propose or advocate for solutions, aligned with the WHS 11th grade requirement of Public Speaking. The English and Social Studies Department are proposing a replacement of the current quarter-year Public Speaking required course with an interdisciplinary co-taught half-year course in which students work individually or in groups to identify issues in their community, partner with stakeholders, and propose solutions. Additional staffing will be necessary to preserve students' abilities to pursue elective offerings, maintain reasonable class sizes, and introduce opportunities for student civic engagement. *(Strategic Priority 1: Meaningful Learning Experiences and Strategic Priority 2: Coherent, Connected Curriculum)*.

.2 FTE Director of Safety and Security: \$20,000

At the request of the School Committee, the FY'22 budget preserved the District's initiative to hire a .4 FTE Director of Safety and Security, which was halted by the transition to remote learning and the onset of the pandemic. It was going to be challenging to fill this position before January in the FY'22 budget and it was therefore only partially funded at .2 FTE. In FY'23, the proposed budget allocates additional dollars to fully fund the .4 FTE Director of Safety and Security. *(Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure for the Future)*

1.0 FTE Special Education Building Substitute: \$25,000

The Principal and Special Education administrator at the Downey Elementary School identified a need for an additional substitute allocated to the Downey School for the explicit purpose of covering Special Education Team meetings. This will allow for skilled and consistent staffing for student IEPs when teachers and staff are called to attend mandated meetings. As Downey houses both the PEER and WABA programs, the number and frequency of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Team meetings is highest at Downey and the need to ensure appropriate staffing and coverage exceeds the standard building substitute approach used in other buildings. *(Strategic Priority 2: Healthy and Supported School Community)*

2.0 FTE ABA Tutors: \$90,000

This staffing is required to meet the IEP requirements of students who have moved into the District or changed placements and now have IEPs that call for additional Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) support. *(Strategic Priority 2: Healthy and Supported School Community)*

2.0 FTE Instructional Assistants

This staffing is required to meet the IEP requirements of students who have moved into the District or now have IEPs that call for additional Instructional Assistant support. *(Strategic Priority 2: Healthy and Supported School Community)*

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a methodology that uses principles of how people learn, such as repeated trials and positive reinforcement, to focus on improving specific behaviors, such as social skills, communication, and academics as well as adaptive learning skills, such as fine motor dexterity, hygiene, grooming, and other daily living skills. It is used to help certain students to learn new skills, minimize negative behaviors, and maintain positive behaviors. It also helps develop students' ability to transfer skills and behaviors to new situations.

.5 FTE High School Specialized Program Transition Coach: \$30,000

The Westwood Public Schools supports identified students with disabilities who continue their eligibility for services from ages 18 - 22 via our Transition Program. Most commonly, these services take the form of community-based internships and employment, community college access, instruction in home and community life skills and a gradual transition to college, career and adult agency supports. The WPS Transition Program is staffed by one teacher and multiple Instructional Assistants and/or Applied Behavior Analysis tutors. For many years, additional support for identifying new internship and job locations, supporting students once they are placed, and providing outreach and support to employers was provided informally. The addition of this part-time position allows the District to formalize this work and strengthen relationships with our outside community partners and identify new work settings for students. It is anticipated that the program will grow next year from the current census of seven, to ten adult students. *(Strategic Priority 1: Meaningful Learning Experiences)*

.5 FTE Administrative Assistant (Facilities Department): \$32,500

The addition of a part-time administrative assistant for the Facilities Department will permit better tracking of payroll, maintenance work orders, cleaning requests, and the procurement of services and supplies. This will enable the department to be significantly more responsive to school staff. In recent years, because the Director and Assistant Director have personally completed administrative tasks such as the monitoring of custodial payroll and attendance and the entering of purchase orders into the Town procurement system, their supervisory and technical expertise has not been fully available to the District. In the coming years, it is also anticipated that the Director of Facilities will dedicate more time to interfacing with the construction and project management team that is working on the Hanlon-Deerfield Elementary Building Project. *(Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure for the Future)*

.5 FTE Administrative Assistant (Business Office): No impact

The Business Office of the Westwood Schools manages multiple receivables, including up to \$3M annually in payments for bus and athletic fees, collection of building use fees, and receipt of tuitions for Extended Day, Prodigy, and Preschool. These activities have been supervised by their respective departments, and they each use different systems for reconciliation and accounting. In an effort to improve fiscal controls, the Westwood Schools is proposing to add a part-time position to standardize the accounting processes for these receivables and to implement a periodic reconciliation schedule. The

cost of this position will be incurred by the revenue-generating activities, via a salary offset. (*Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure for the Future*)

1.0 METCO Advisor (Elementary):

No impact

With the expansion of METCO to the elementary level, the Westwood Schools is adding a position that will be staffed at the elementary school as an on-site support for students and staff. This position will provide academic support to students as they transition to Westwood and will also provide coordination with families. Since elementary students will be riding the bus from Boston to Westwood, a per diem stipend is also budgeted to enable this person to serve as a bus monitor. There is no financial impact to this change to the proposed FY'23 budget due to the \$250K increase in METCO Grant funding that has accompanied METCO expansion. (*Strategic Priority 2: Healthy and Supported School Community*)

Net other staffing adjustments:

\$2,148

Other minor staffing adjustments included in the FY'23 proposed budget include the addition of a stipend line of \$1.5K for Freshman Orientation, \$5K for an Extended School Year (ESY) Administrative Assistant, and an additional \$5.7K to convert a Tier I

Tech Support Specialist position into a Tier II Tech Support Specialist position in recognition of growing technology support due to wide adoption of instructional technology. There is a reduction of \$10K in the district's contribution toward a Shared Management Informational Services position that is staffed at the Town.

Westwood's participation as a METCO school district and its commitment to the goals of the program are long-standing, dating back to the 1960s. The history of METCO, Inc. is rooted in desegregation efforts. Westwood's membership as a METCO district reflects the community's belief that the way that students think about race and each other is positively changed when we learn with each other and that education is improved when we don't learn in isolation. For many years, therefore, there have been questions from residents and discussions at School Committee meetings about the possibility of expanding Westwood's METCO program so that it begins in kindergarten, allowing for an earlier and fuller integration of Boston resident students into the school community.

The barrier to restructuring and expanding has primarily been related to funding. The METCO program is funded each year by the state legislature as part of the state budget process. That state allocation is then distributed by grants to participating district. The local allocation is determined using a per pupil funding formula. With an FY'22 increase in funding for METCO at the state level, Westwood's proposal to expand next year was granted. Currently, Westwood has a METCO student enrollment of about 51 students in grades 6-12. Our plan is to expand Westwood's program from K-12, by adding 32-36 elementary students. The resulting Westwood METCO student enrollment would total about 83-88 students. While this is still a modest size program when compared to other METCO districts, it is a significant and exciting change for Westwood. The increase in the District's grant allotment will fully offset the costs of the larger program.

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'22, 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'23 budget, we have budgeted for tuition and transportation for known/anticipated Special Education students, including contractual transportation increases.

Tuition	FY'22	FY'23	Difference
Residential Tuition	\$244,892	\$522,603	\$277,711
Day Tuition	\$407,890	\$567,405	\$159,515
Collaborative Tuition	\$793,732	\$383,506	(\$410,226)
Tuition Total	\$1,446,515	\$1,473,515	\$27,000

Transportation	FY'22	FY'23	Difference
Out-of-District SPED Transportation	\$420,439	\$395,439	(\$25,000)
In-District SPED Transportation	\$338,389	\$323,389	(\$15,000)
Transportation Total	\$758,828	\$718,828	(\$40,000)

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 (e.g., Braille instruction). The contracted services line also provides hiring flexibility to the district. For example, since the start of the pandemic, 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. This approach has been effective and efficient and is anticipated to continue.

The Contracted Services line item has been historically underfunded. A multi-year look back suggests that the District can expect approximately \$500K annually for the provision of specialized contracted services. In FY'22, this line was funded at \$312K (from a combination of funding sources, including the IDEA Grant and Circuit Breaker) and the district made a commitment to initiate a four-year structured adjustment of this line, increasing it by \$85K in FY'22. The District has reviewed the priorities for FY'23 and determined that Contract Services should be level funded for the coming year, except for a small increase of about \$10K due to an increase in the IDEA Grant. This "pause" in the structured adjustment of the line is appropriate this year because of \$215K in American Rescue Plan funds that have been added to the IDEA Grant in FY'22 and can be carried to the first quarter of FY'23. These funds permit the district to absorb excess costs in the coming school year. However, these are one-time funds, so it will likely be necessary to resume the multi-year structured adjustment of Contracted Services in FY'24. It is furthermore anticipated that once the COVID-related contract employees have completed their work in the District, a more thorough analysis of remaining Contract Service needs can be completed. This will inform future budget requests to further stabilize this line. With that said, should FY'23 require the continued services of contracted nurses to implement COVID protocols, the District will likely need to collaborate with the Town to access reserve accounts or relief funding, such as ARPA or other one-time revenue.

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

Increase in Transportation and METCO elementary bus: No impact

The budget includes a proposed increase to the transportation line, to account for annual increases in the cost of our contracted regular transportation (yellow buses). This amount is an estimate, as our current bus contract ends in June 2022. There is also an addition of a METCO elementary bus, which will be necessary for supporting METCO expansion to the elementary level. This bus is funded on the METCO grant with no impact to the FY'23 operating budget. *(Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure for the Future)*

Increase in Technology Equipment & Maintenance: \$33,700

As a result of the pandemic, the district acquired some new technology platforms to support remote and hybrid learning. The district has also invested in a large number of new devices, resulting in all students having an assigned device in grades K - 12. In order to support these new services and increased hardware capacity, the Technology Department has overspent the Equipment & Maintenance line. It is anticipated that these services will continue to be needed. Examples include a Google Workspace subscription that increases the functionality of Google Classroom (\$13K), Verizon Hotspots (\$7.5K) for families and staff, a Jamf Ipad management system (\$8.7K), and a Comcast dedicated internet service line (\$10.8K). Concurrently, the district has audited the use of online curriculum resources and subscription services and found some savings (-\$7K) by converting district licenses to individual licenses where appropriate. *(Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure for the Future)*

Increase in High School supplies and subscriptions: \$11,200

The high school schedule change now provides equitable time for students and staff for support, enrichment, and collaboration via S-Block. WHS hopes to maintain its contract with MyFlexLearning, a Student Management System at a cost of \$2.7K, to schedule students into S-block offerings and take S-block attendance. J-Term has historically been supported by funding from the Foundation for

Westwood Education, the Westwood Cultural Council, METCO, and local banks. This funding cannot be relied upon in FY'23 and the overall operational costs of J-Term are high. Maintaining and safeguarding the program's robust offerings requires an addition of \$7K to the operating budget. Finally, the Freshman Orientation will be a new two-day program that will promote high school readiness and strengthen Grades 6-12 alignment particularly in the transition from to high school without disrupting the first day of school or sacrificing time-on-learning. This program requires a budget of \$1.5K for supplies. *(Strategic Priority 1: Meaningful Learning Experiences and Strategic Priority 3: Healthy and Supported School Community)*

Increase in subscriptions in Curriculum & Instruction: \$10,000

In FY'22, the district invested in online platforms to make it easy to quickly assess student progress and plan for next steps in terms of instruction and intervention. These platforms, including the STAR Assessment, have now been rolled out K-8. A complementary content-based subscription called Freckle has been piloted at the middle school level this year, and a proposed \$10K investment will permit the Westwood Schools to offer this content at the elementary levels in FY'23. This subscription provides teachers with individualized content to support intervention and the application of it throughout K-8 classrooms will support our efforts for a Coherent, Connected Curriculum. *(Strategic Priority 2: Coherent, Connected Curriculum)*

Increase for Attorney fees and School Committee Policy review: \$20,000

Our legal services line item has not been adjusted in several years. This request will allow us to increase that line item to reflect increases in attorney rates and actual spending as well as pay for the School Committee policy manual review that will begin this year and continue in FY'23. *(Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure for the Future)*

Reinstatement of non-salary lines in Administration: \$11,200

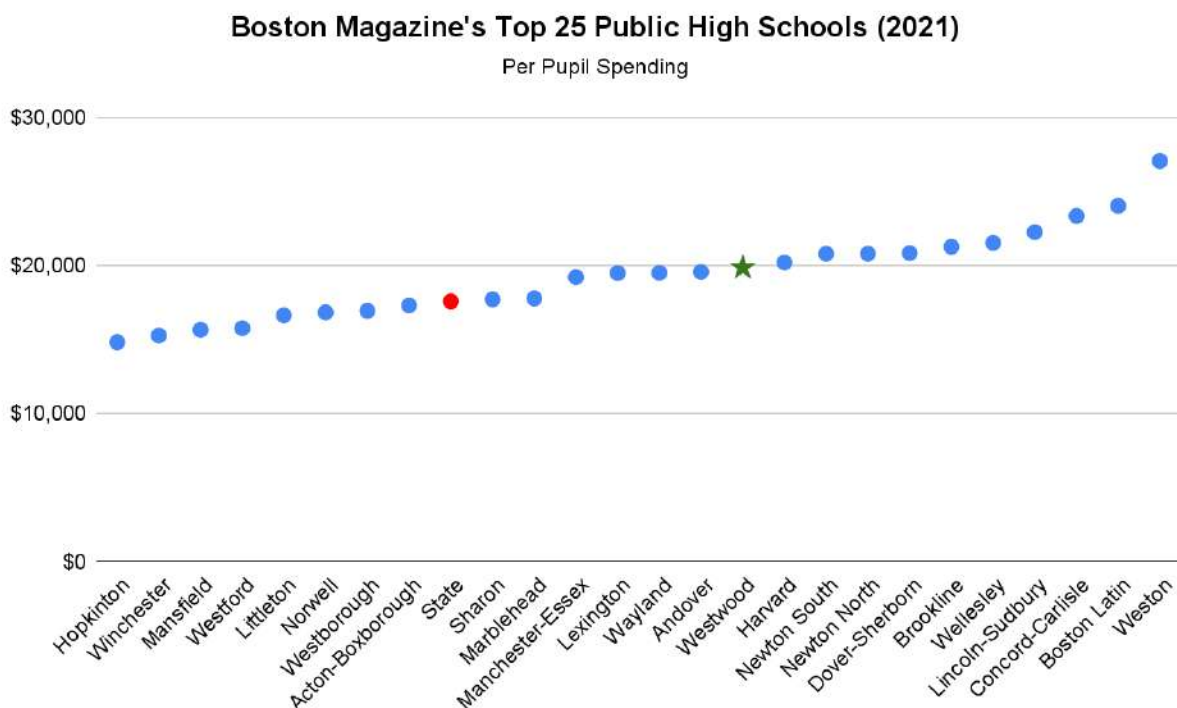
During the FY'22 budget process, in order to balance the budget after the reinstatement of the .2 FTE Director of Security, the district reduced lines that funded mileage reimbursement and travel to participate in professional development conferences. The FY'23 budget reinstates these lines. *(Strategic Priority 1: Meaningful Learning Experiences).*

Reduction in PPE and Cleaning budget: (\$50,000)

The district has made a decision to cut the budget for personal protective equipment that was specifically established in response to the pandemic. The Westwood Schools will continue to purchase protective and cleaning supplies for the custodial department, nurses, and Student Services staff as appropriate. These items are budgeted in other areas of the operating budget. If the need for PPE for employees beyond these roles is needed in the future, the District would collaborate with the Town to access reserve accounts or relief funding, or other one-time revenue.

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 2021. The data presented is from the MA Department of Education website and reflects FY'20 spending, the most recent data that is available.



As illustrated above:

- The state average per pupil expenditure is \$17,575.
- The mean per pupil expenditure for districts on this list is \$19,302.
- The median per pupil expenditure for the districts on this list is \$19,497.

Westwood's per pupil expenditure of \$19,857 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. 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
- **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 2022- 2023, another preschool classroom is not feasible at this time.
- **Restoration of library staffing:** As part of the adjustment to the FY'21 budget prior to the 2020-2021 school year due to the pandemic, the District reduced elementary library staffing and eliminated middle school library staff and the K-12 Director of Libraries position. While this was a difficult, but necessary, decision at the time, the District places a high value on school libraries and the role that librarians play in helping our students develop the informational literacy needed to navigate today's ubiquitous media landscape. We are considering how to structure program staffing in the near future to help us meet that goal.
- **Additional teaching staff to expand elementary specials offerings:** We are having ongoing discussions in the District about how to expand the array of elementary specials programming in such areas as coding, financial literacy, engineering, health, and orchestra.
- **Expansion of the PEER Program:** The district currently has a very successful and highly regarded program for elementary age students with moderate Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at the Downey Elementary, the PEER program. This sought after program is currently running near capacity. Building a second classroom would allow for additional seats and expand the expertise in teaching students with ASD to a second school location. This year, space at another elementary school was identified for the program, but staffing constraints make the addition in this year's budget less than ideal. This proposal will continue to be revisited as the elementary consolidation and other staffing opportunities develop.

- **Human Resources Director:** The Westwood Schools is an organization of more than 600 employees. Though we collaborate closely with the Town's HR Director, the District does not have a dedicated Director of Human Resources. In FY'22, 30% of the positions turned over due to new hires, staff moving between roles, or leaves of absence. In addition to the leadership functions of an HR Director, the WPS does not have a dedicated staff member who can complement the onboarding and benefits management by the Town Human Resources department and support the administration of a staff.

WHAT ARE THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT DRIVE THE ANNUAL CAPITAL BUDGET FOR FY'23?

The FY'23 Capital Budget covers technology upgrades, large purchases of furniture or equipment including copiers, as well as facilities improvements in the HVAC, roofing, and other areas. The budget does not fluctuate significantly from year-to-year, but there are annual changes in how the funds are applied.

Capital funds for technology are typically used to sustain our 1-1 Chromebook program, student iPads, teacher devices, infrastructure improvements, and to fund other special projects. We are fully 1-1 in grades PK - 12. Chromebooks are on a 3.5-year refresh cycle. Teacher laptops are on a 5-year refresh cycle. In FY'23, funds for technology will be used to pay for a summer network upgrade at five of our school buildings. This upgrade will complement the network installation in the Hanlon-Deerfield Elementary Building Project, although that building network will be funded by a separate budget. In addition, FY'23 funds set aside for technology will allow replacement of Chromebooks for Grade 6 and Grade 9, iPads for Elementary technology packs, and the High School language lab.

The capital budget for FY'23 sets aside funds for furniture and copier replacement. This upcoming summer, the District will be directing attention to the aging furniture in the High School library, especially the large circulation desk which may be replaced with smaller or more mobile furniture. The High School needs a new kiln for the ceramic program. Also, the district regularly replaces its inventory of copiers and some equipment is approaching its useful life with over 10 years of heavy usage.

Finally, the FY'23 budget preserves funding for building improvements, including replacements of HVAC units and roofs. The District will be seeking an update to the 2015 Master Capital Plan that was prepared by SMMA architects and engineers. The renewed capital plan will provide an assessment of the rooftop ventilation units at the Middle School, which are mounted on the modulars and are approaching the end of their useful life. The District will also seek recommendations to replace the twenty classroom univents at Sheehan, all of which are older than twenty years, with eight original to the building. Engineers will need to assess the roofs at the Sheehan, Martha Jones, and Middle School. In each case, vendors have recommended near-term replacement of some sections.

IS THIS THE FINAL FY'23 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!

