



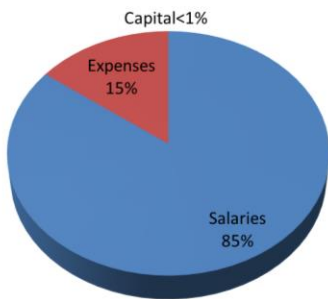
DANIEL E, GUTKANST, ED.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Date: December 13, 2022
To: Needham School Committee
From: Daniel E. Gutekanst, Superintendent

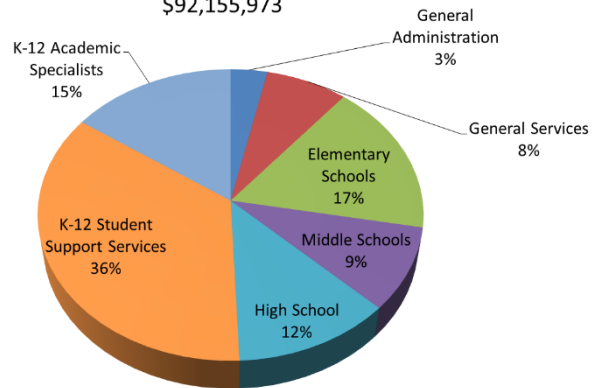
Enclosed, please find the proposed FY 2023/24 operating budget for the Needham Public Schools. The proposed plan totals \$92,155,973 and represents a \$4.9 million, 5.6% increase over the current budget year.

FY24 Budget Summary

FY 2024
School Committee Recommended Operating
Budget Expenditures by Line Item Category
\$92,155,973



FY 24
Superintendent Recommended Operating Budget:
Expenditures by Program Area
\$92,155,973



This request provides the resources required to address existing staff contractual obligations, enrollment growth, special education needs, and the District’s Portrait of a Needham Graduate Five-Year Strategic Plan. In addition, the budget plan provides the resources we require to continue to meet ongoing student needs resulting from disrupted learning and to address equity needs and interventions.

Highlights of the enclosed plan are identified below.

At the **elementary level**, the proposal includes the additional resources and staffing needed to: maintain elementary class sizes at or below School Committee policy guidelines (Eliot, Sunita Williams); staff an elementary schedule that optimizes consistent learning time with homeroom teachers for all students (i.e., Spanish, Wellness, Music); provide more leadership support (Eliot,

Mitchell); address curricular needs through a reading screener and digital licenses; and provide additional and targeted special education and counseling support.

At the **middle school level**, the proposal includes additional resources and staffing to do the following: provide enhanced special education, counseling, and part-time nursing services, including a new ILC classroom (Pollard); continue funding for a part-time literacy specialist (High Rock); and provide staff for lunch monitoring.

At the **high school level**, resources and staffing are proposed to: maintain elective offerings, including part-time teachers for English, Science, Social Studies, and Theater; bolster special education, psychology, and nursing supports; create a new High School Guidance Department Chair; create new stipends to support clubs and co-curricular activities; provide additional financial resources for athletics.

At a **district level**, we include funding for a third installment for technology and one-to one devices; for resources to attract and retain bus drivers, transportation nurses, and substitute teachers; for an anticipated increase for out of district tuition and related transportation costs; to continue our survey tool subscription; to provide an additional Connolly bus for transportation; and to expand services for our preschool, including staff for an additional classroom and their related services.

The plan also addresses the District's need to **meet ongoing student needs resulting from disrupted learning and address equity needs**, increased salaries to maintain services and provide reasonable, fair, and competitive wages (given current inflationary rates), as well as the State's unilateral tuition increase for students enrolled in special education private schools. Additionally, the plan addresses the remaining half of funding for Summer Bridges staffing costs.

Significant Assumptions Incorporated into the FY 2023/24 Budget:

- Enrollment.

- The budget is based on a preliminary projected PreK-12 enrollment of 5,601 students, an increase of 68 students over the current year enrollment of 5,533. Although the enrollment remains low, relative to pre-Pandemic levels, the ongoing presence of COVID and the need to meet student needs resulting from disrupted learning, are significant drivers of the additional staffing and operational resources requested – and in particular, resources for counseling and social-emotional supports.
- In addition, elementary enrollment is projected to increase slightly, from 2,531 in the current year to 2,566 next year, requiring the addition of a new classroom teachers at Sunita Williams and a reduction of two classrooms at Eliot.

- Because of a growing special education population, the FY24 budget includes a new ILC classroom at Pollard as well as a new classroom at the preschool. Both requests include resources for teachers, teaching assistants, and new materials.
- **Cost of Living Adjustments.** A cost of living adjustment is provided for school staff, including teachers, administrators, instructional assistants, and administrative support personnel. The following increases have been set by collective bargaining contracts for FY 23/24: a 2.50% increase for Unit A and a 2.50%/2.75% increase for Unit B. This year, the School Committee will negotiate new collective bargaining agreements with Units C, D, and E, which includes teaching assistants, bookkeepers, administrative support, and cafeteria staff. For all, the committee will strive for fair and competitive wage and salary adjustments. A modest cost of living adjustment is included for these employees, as well as other, non-union employees. Level funding is proposed for all non-salary accounts.
- **Out-of-District Tuitions.** Out of District tuition and transportation expenses increase by \$521,962 in FY24, including \$194,962 for tuition and \$327,000 for transportation.
 - Total tuition costs increase by \$1,313,721 over the prior year, reflecting the effect of OSD's 14% cost of living adjustment for FY24 (which added \$1,005,763 to tuition expenses), other OSD-approved rate adjustments (totaling \$121,400) and student placement changes (which added \$186,558 in net expense). These additional expenses are offset by an anticipated increase in Circuit Breaker reimbursement of \$970,122 and \$148,637 in 'budget capacity' within the tuition line item. The net required increase of \$194,962 is included within the recommended FY24 operating budget request.
 - Out of district transportation costs increase by \$327,000. Although ridership remains relatively steady at 70-75 students, due to changes in student placements, there are now larger number of students being transported as singleton riders than in the past, as well as. students being transported longer distances at higher rates. The FY24 budget reflects these changes, as well as a modest 2% rate increase for our contract services provider.

Budget Development Process & Priorities:

The FY 2023/24 budget development process began earlier in the school year, when the School Committee identified budget priorities to guide the administration in the budget planning process. These included:

- The District's Portrait of a Needham Graduate Strategic Priorities.
- The need for highly qualified staff, teaching within established student/ teacher ratio guidelines.
- The ongoing refinement of curriculum, instruction and assessment practices; and
- The need to develop and maintain educational resources and a technology infrastructure that supports student learning and meets District goals.

Administrators developed budget requests in the Fall and submitted them for consideration and discussion in November. The Central Office Administration then met with principals and program directors to review and discuss budget requests in light of the School Committee's identified priorities and district goals. Finally, the Superintendent consulted with the Town Manager and the School Committee and Finance Committee budget liaisons to understand Town and School needs as they relate to the overall budget planning process.

What are the Capital Project Priorities for FY 2023/24?

The FY24 requested capital budget request totals \$7,919,083. Funds are requested for technology and equipment replacement, and for feasibility designs for Master Plan Facilities Projects. These additional requests include:

- \$3,117,850 for school technology;
- \$1,139,262 for school vehicle replacement;
- \$286,971 for copier replacement;
- \$125,000 for school furniture replacement;
- \$1.5 million for a feasibility design for Mithcell (Master Plan Option A); and
- \$1.75 million for a feasibility design for Pollard Middle (Master Plan Option D)

In addition, the School Department supports the school-related operating and capital facility requests submitted by the Town's Building Maintenance Department, including:

- \$1 million in ongoing support for the Facilities Maintenance Warrant Article;
- \$9 million in construction funds for the Rooftop Unit Replacements at the Broadmeadow and Eliot Schools;
- \$250,000 in construction funds through the Energy Efficiency Article to fund the replacement of a boiler at Needham High School; and
- \$66,306 for additional custodial support in school and Town buildings

What are the Next Steps in the Budget Process?

The School administration is eager to discuss this preliminary budget request with the School Committee and members of the community. Additional meetings and deadlines include:

- **December 14th:** School Committee and Finance Committee liaisons budget workshop
- **December 20th and subsequent meetings in January:** School Committee reviews the Superintendent's budget request
- **December and January:** Finance Committee liaisons meet with School Committee liaisons and Central Office staff to review and discuss requests.

- **January 3rd**: Town Manager consults with School Committee about the budget plan and releases FY24-28 Capital Improvement Plan
- **January 17th**: School Committee holds a public hearing on the budget plan.
- **January 18th**: The Finance Committee reviews the School budget proposal.
- **January 24th**: The School Committee votes the budget plan and sends the budget to the Town Manager and Finance Committee.

I look forward to presenting the budget plan to the School Committee, Finance Committee, and other Town boards and community members in the weeks ahead. We will have thoughtful and sometimes challenging discussions, and I know our focus will be on ensuring a reasonable and appropriate level of funding is available to support the community's greatest assets: its schools and the young people they serve.