

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE FY 2013 BUDGET GUIDELINES

Mission Statement: *The Cambridge Public Schools will be a diverse urban school system that works with families and the community to successfully educate ALL of its students at high levels.*

In preparation for the budget for school year 2012-13, the School Committee has worked with the administration to provide guidance in advance of the preparation of the budget. The budget guidelines enumerated below represent the Committee's thoughts on what are the most important areas of focus as the proposed budget is developed. These guidelines are based on Cambridge's 2010-12 district goals (available on line at www3.cpsd.us/schoolcommittee/school_committee) and the goals of the Innovation Agenda, a district restructuring plan that will create an Upper School Program for grades 6-8. The goals for the Innovation Agenda are:

- To provide all Cambridge Public School students with a superior academic and social experience in their elementary and middle grades years that raises student achievement, eliminates achievement gaps, and develops 21st century skills
- To build a grade 6-12 pathway that ensures all Cambridge Public School students are well prepared for academic and social success in high school and post-secondary education
- To provide all students in special populations, such as special needs students and English language learners, with the same quality school experience provided to other students
- To ensure high quality professional development and collaboration opportunities for Cambridge Public Schools educators, improving educators' experience and quality
- To ensure that Cambridge Public Schools facilities fully support the expectations and demands of the academic programs
- To ensure that the Cambridge Public Schools makes the best and most efficient use of resources in providing superior service to students

The budget document will show a clear connection between expenditures and accomplishing the school committee goals.

We recognize that the district must balance many competing needs while also crafting a budget that adheres to City financial guidelines; therefore, a strategic framework for determining budget priorities is essential. We also recognize that the restructuring required by the Innovation Agenda is an enormous and complex undertaking, and will require the careful reallocation of resources. We ask the Superintendent to review the entire JK-12 program as well as all operational departments to ensure the equitable and effective allocation of resources. In providing guidelines, the Committee acknowledges its role in setting priorities among a number of worthy endeavors. In writing the guidelines, the Committee seeks to provide enough specificity to provide guidance, while leaving details of implementation up to the Superintendent and his staff.

The School Committee's overarching goal is to maximize student achievement for every student. The following guidelines are to be used in developing budget allocation proposals in support of that objective.

I. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Improving achievement for all students, with a particular emphasis on reducing the achievement gaps that currently exist for students in certain sub-groups, including students of color, low-income students, students who are English language learners and students with special needs, is a critical area of focus for our district. Part of this focus also includes providing challenge for the high achieving students. Opportunities for remedial and accelerated learning both during and outside of the school day are important and strategic to our goal.

The FY 2013 budget should continue and build upon the following:

- Use of student data to determine the areas of need in classrooms and for individual students. In order to use student data effectively, teachers and administrators must have access to appropriate training as well as sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues.
- Development and refinement of authentic assessments in all subject areas to assure that student progress is being measured in ways beyond the MCAS tests.
- Continuation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) pilot at four schools.
- High quality professional development and collaboration opportunities for CPS educators, improving educators' experience and quality.
- Training for administrators to support implementation of new, state mandated teacher evaluation system.

The district has long-standing relationships with community partners that provide services to students and families above and beyond what the district alone is able to provide. To the extent possible, the FY13 budget should continue to support those community partners that assist the district in meeting its goals and engage them in a strategic manner to support our efforts.

II. INNOVATION AGENDA

The restructuring of the district's existing elementary education program from a system comprising 11 JK-8 and one JK-6 elementary schools to a system comprising 11 JK-5 schools, four Upper Schools for students in grades 6 to 8, and one JK-8 dual immersion language school is a complex task. In recognition of the smaller grade span in the elementary program (JK- 5), and the resulting reduction in number of students and classrooms at many of the schools, we understand that staffing will be reduced in some areas in proportion to the reduced enrollment. We ask that the FY13 budget provide adequate staffing for students in grades 6 to 8 for academics, visual arts, performing arts, physical education, health and pre-vocational, academic,

and other electives. In addition, we ask that the district work with City Departments to design and implement out of school programming in coordination with the Innovation Agenda.

III. ELEMENTARY PROGRAM (Jr. Kindergarten to Grade 5)

Student growth and achievement in the early years is critical to success throughout their school careers. We ask that the FY13 budget support young students and their teachers during their early years in school by continuing to provide favorable class sizes. In addition, using what is learned from the Response to Intervention initiative, effective supplemental interventions will be identified and developed across the district in both reading and mathematics. Professional development will be designed not only to strengthen classroom instruction for all students, but also in the effective use of these supplemental interventions.

IV. HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

Support the CRLS faculty and staff during the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NAESC) accreditation process that will occur during SY12-13. Continue to develop rigorous academic core courses embedding 21st century skills with high expectation for all students and appropriate supports and challenges, to maximize intellectual development for each student and to provide equitable opportunities for all students to achieve at high levels. Students who are struggling with academics or behavioral issues should receive appropriate interventions. We also ask that the Superintendent insure that all at risk students are able to connect with and be supported by appropriate interventions.

V. SPECIAL POPULATIONS

All students in special populations, such as special needs students and English language learners, should have access to the same quality school experience provided to other students. Under the Innovation Agenda the placement of Special Education substantially separate classrooms and Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classrooms will allow students to stay in one school community for grades JK through 5, and transition to the same Upper School campus as their regular education peers for grades 6 through 8.

Special Education

In FY11 a comprehensive review of the Special Education program was conducted by an outside consultant. During the current fiscal year, the Special Education Director and the administration are reviewing the findings and will present a proposed implementation plan to the School Committee. We ask for thoughtful analysis of these recommendations so that any changes to the existing program or new programs are not simply additive. The FY13 budget should include the resources or restructuring required to begin implementation of the recommendations from this study that will result in improvements to the Special Education program and result in effective and efficient use of resources.

Bilingual Education

The FY13 budget should continue to allocate funding to support the training of Cambridge teachers in Sheltered English Immersion category training in order to meet State mandated requirements.

VI. SCHOOL CLIMATE & HEALTH AND SAFETY

Building a safe, supportive and nurturing environment allows students and staff to focus on achievement without distraction. The FY13 Budget should support and enhance effective programs and curriculum that produce students who are physically, mentally, emotionally and socially healthy and safe. We ask that the budget support the health and well-being of children in Cambridge. We ask that the district continue its efforts to develop effective anti-bullying programs, strong home-school connections, and a coherent set of out-of-school time opportunities, all of which contribute to the goal of improving school climate. In addition, changes that make schools, schoolyards, and school buses environmentally healthy should be considered whenever appropriate.

VII. PROGRAM & CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Systematic program evaluation is an important tool for making thoughtful decisions about which programs have the greatest positive impact on student achievement. The four year curriculum review cycle, initiated in FY11 with a review of the math curriculum, should be continued so that in time all curriculum areas join the review cycle to ensure students are receiving effective instruction of an excellent curriculum in every subject area and that teaching and learning standards are well-conceived and aligned with the Common Core and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Funding to implement improvements recommended in the evaluations should be available

VIII. CONTROLLED CHOICE

The current controlled choice policy, as implemented, has not led to the School Committee's goal of socio-economically balanced schools. Over time the controlled choice policy has become difficult to understand due to the complexity of the formulas and the many additions and amendments that have occurred since adoption in 2001. In order for CPS to have a controlled choice policy which both leads to the desired goal of balanced student populations and is simpler to understand and implement, we ask that the budget support a substantial review in FY2013.

IX. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

We ask that the FY13 budget include resources to develop a public engagement plan, including improved communication with families. Particular attention should be given to student retention, student recruitment and the registration process. A review of the Family Resource Center to evaluate staffing needs should occur as well. As part of this review, the district will investigate the possibility of using the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grant to assist with funding additional services at the Family Resource Center.

X. TECHNOLOGY & OPERATIONS

Continue to develop technology that will improve use of data in decision making, improve the delivery of services, improve district operations and improve communication and support for families. This area includes both electronic communication for school/home as well as data-driven decision-making support for the district leaders. Continue improvements to and training of teachers and administrators in the use of YARDS, the district's data management system.

Staff levels for school-based and non-school based personnel should be reviewed and adjusted. On-going review and assessment of operational departments such as transportation, food services, business and finance, and human resources, is key to ensuring that district staff are delivering services in an effective and efficient manner. On an ongoing basis, the year budget should ensure funding for continued capital projects so that our schools are safe for students, staff and families. In addition, the district should identify cost-savings through energy efficiency and sustainability in all school buildings.

XI. LONG RANGE PLANNING

The Innovation Agenda will bring many changes to the district as a whole and to individual school communities. We recognize that we are setting the foundation for a multiple year approach to restructuring the Cambridge Public Schools. The process of realigning our resources, including staff allocations, budget allocations for materials and services, and our physical plant, to support the changes of the Innovation Agenda will span several budget years. We ask that the FY13 budget include resources for review to ensure that the Cambridge Public Schools makes the best and most efficient use of resources in providing superior service to students; and to ensure that Cambridge Public Schools facilities fully support the expectations and demands of the academic programs.