

CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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TO: School Committee

FROM: Jeffrey M. Young
Superintendent of Schools

RE: Additional FY14 Budget Information

DATE: March 8, 2013

Every year, the Superintendent's Proposed Budget reflects a set of value decisions. Even in a year such as this one, when the City's allocation to Cambridge Public Schools exceeds what we have received in previous years, there are difficult choices to be made. Typically, making these choices involves a three-way balancing act--between the long list of improvements we would like to make in our schools, the amount of resources available to fund items on that list, and the need to focus our dollars and energy so that we can produce the greatest positive impact for our students and staff.

In FY14, the most important choice we have made in preparing the budget is to build on our strengths and stabilize the district rather than perpetuate an unfortunate habit of constantly starting new programs. To be truthful, CPS is on the verge of suffering from "Initiative Fatigue," and we strongly believe at this time that we need to consolidate the gains we are making instead of moving in fits and starts from one great new idea to the next. Research on sustained district improvement and growth shows that implementation of new programs must be followed by time to refine and practice in order to sustain and realize gains.

In this memo, we aim to make transparent our decision-making process around several potential initiatives that have been advanced by members of our school community. These are programs that the School Committee and others asked us to consider including in the budget, but which, after careful analysis, we have chosen not to include. With full understanding that not funding a proposed program inevitably produces disappointment, frustration and perhaps even anger for some, we will try in these pages to explain why we have made the decisions not to fund particular areas of public interest.

I. World Language in the Elementary Grades

First things first: In the FY13 Adopted School Committee Budget document, I wrote, "Our commitment is to develop a rigorous, coherent world language program for elementary students by SY 2013/14." A year ago, it was our intention to introduce a world language program in our JK-5 schools for all the reasons most people agree are important. We believe that students learn languages well when they begin the study at an early age. We believe that a second language will position students for success in the global economy. We agree that certain social justice goals can be addressed by enhancing students' understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Thus, it is with regret that we have decided not to begin the program in the upcoming school year, and I apologize for raising the community's expectations and then dashing them.

The decision not to begin an elementary world language program in SY 2013/14 was based on several factors: 1) our need to focus on improvements to the existing 6th-8th grade program; 2) our need to articulate the academic goals for a K-8 world language program before simply adding more classes to the school day; and 3) our need to understand the impact of adding language instruction on the time available for core content instruction.

- **Improvements to 6th to 8th Grade Program:** Beginning in SY 2013/14, 6th grade students will choose one language to study rather than continue the exploratory program. This model will significantly increase the students' exposure to the grammar, vocabulary and culture of their selected language throughout grades 6-8, preparing them to continue their world language studies at the high school at a higher level. The upper school heads and the Coordinator of World Language are also exploring ways to increase the amount of time allocated to world language instruction. Electives and other cultural opportunities will be used to expose students to other languages and cultures so that the benefits of the exploratory model are retained.
- **Curriculum Review to Articulate the Academic Goals:** Before we launch a world language program in JK-5, we need to know what our program goals are, what the curriculum will look like and how many minutes per week will be required to meet the program goals and curriculum needs. This year, as the district considered implementing a world language program in the elementary grades, current research about effective approaches to language acquisition was reviewed and evaluated. A summary of research conducted by Hanover Research, a global information services company with expertise in K-12 education research, states that the most effective non-immersion language programs require "... at least 75-90 minutes of exposure to foreign language per week through two or three class sessions, although some school districts and academics call for a minimum of over 200 minutes of instruction per week with classes held every day." (November 2012) The district needs to articulate the goals of the program before designing a curriculum. In order to do this, the district will commence a curriculum review, involving staff and community members to articulate the goals of an elementary school program and recommend design options for possible inclusion in the FY 2015 budget.
- **Understanding the Impact of Adding World Language on Core Content Instruction:** One of the issues that the district confronts as it considers the implementation of a world language program in JK-5 is that there simply is not enough time in the school day to meet the increasing demands on instructional time for the core subject areas. In the coming school year, a district priority will be to increase the time in the schedule for science instruction, given both the anticipated adoption of the new Massachusetts Science Standards this summer and new accountability system for science involving MCAS. The State is revising the Massachusetts Science Framework, which will be more rigorous at all grade levels, and will require a significant increase in the number of minutes each week dedicated to science instruction. Currently, across our elementary schools, there is a wide range in the amount of science instruction our students receive; moving forward, we are going to develop a coherent curriculum for all schools and students. Put simply, as one of the four core subjects, we need to get science right before moving on to additional subject areas. We will not recommend subtracting instructional time from the core subject areas in order to add time for non-core subjects.

Presently, there are 360 minutes (6 hours) in the JK-5 school day totaling 1,800 minutes per week. During the current year, curriculum coordinators and principals have been working together to identify appropriate instructional time for each content area. The chart below shows the total recommended weekly minutes for each subject and for lunch/recess in grades 1-5:

Recommended Instructional Minutes by Content Area for Grades 1 Through 5

Content Area	Recommended Minutes per Week
Morning Meeting/Responsive Classroom	100
English Language Arts - Reading/ Writing/Word Study	600*
Mathematics	350*
Science (Anticipated increase to 180 minutes to meet State standards)	180
Social Studies	90
Music (General music for 45 min. plus 45 more minutes for instruments in Gr. 5)	45-90
Art	45
Physical education	90
Health	45
Library Media/Technology	45
Lunch and recess	250
Total	1,840 Minutes

*Does not include additional time required for Response to Intervention Program

Other pressures on time include scheduling additional time for students to receive interventions in literacy and mathematics as part of the CPS Response to Intervention (RtI) initiative, and focusing time and resources on the CPS achievement priorities of English Language Arts, Math and Science in alignment with state accountability. One of the School Committee's goals is to increase the number of Level 1 schools each year by 3, for a total of 7 schools in 2013 and 10 schools in 2014. This is a very ambitious target and requires that schools be allowed to focus on the district's agreed upon achievement priorities.

As displayed in the table above, once the science standards are in place, program demands will exceed available time by 40 minutes per week (excluding instrumental music). We need a longer school day in Cambridge. Until that is in place, and until we have articulated the programmatic goals, we simply, and sadly, cannot recommend introducing a world language curriculum to the elementary school day.

II. Co-teaching in 7th and 8th Grade Mathematics Classrooms

Currently, co-teaching is used as an instructional strategy to meet the wide range of academic needs in the upper school 6th grade mathematics classrooms. This will continue in SY 2013/14; however, co-teaching will not be expanded to the 7th and 8th grade in the upcoming school year. We made this decision because we are only part way through the first year and thus do not have enough data yet to support a decision to expand the program to 7th and 8th grade. Co-teaching is an expensive model to implement, and any decision to expand the program must be based on data that demonstrates effectiveness. This will be one

of the programs that the new program evaluator will be tasked with evaluating. Discussions with the upper school heads did point to a need for additional support for students who are struggling in mathematics and English language arts. To meet this need, there will be a Math Coach-Interventionist and English Language Arts (ELA) Coach-Interventionist position at each upper school. The role and responsibility of the Math Coach-Interventionist & ELA Coach Interventionist will be to provide support, feedback, and intensive individualized learning/growth opportunities **both** to classroom teachers and to students. For more information about this initiative, please see page 23 of the FY14 Proposed Budget.

III. Additional Librarians for the Upper Schools

During the current school year, upper school heads and assistant principals, in collaboration with district senior administrators, have been intentional in observing and discussing Innovation Agenda program implementation successes and challenges. With regard to library media services for upper school students, the key question posed continues to be: What are the tools and resources our 21st century students need to support demonstration of knowledge, skills, and understandings in today's rapidly changing world of informational technology? The question is not simple to answer. It requires careful consideration and input from those considered to be experts in the field and those who are the intended end users--the students. For these reasons, the proposal for the upcoming school year (SY 2013/14) is to maintain the current level of library media services in each Upper School and launch the following action steps in preparation for SY 2014/15:

1. **June 2013:** Upper school heads in collaboration with appropriate school-based and district staff meet to assess all aspects of the library media program as implemented during year one of the Innovation Agenda
2. **July/August 2013:** Upper school heads in collaboration with appropriate school-based and district staff engage in strategic planning sessions for the purpose of modifying the design of the Upper School Library Media Services program. Modifications will be rooted in "lessons learned" from year one with a lens on 21st century library standards for middle school learners as outlined by the American Association of School Librarians and 21st century design ideas as researched via school architectural experts and digests.
3. **August-November 2013:** Upper school heads in collaboration with appropriate school-based and district staff will complete the recommended program design proposal including staff and budget implications. This proposal will be submitted to the superintendent as part of the budget process.
4. **September 2014:** The expectation would be for full implementation of the modified Upper School Library Media Services proposed design in September of 2014.

IV. Family Liaisons for Upper Schools

Family liaisons for the upper schools are not included in the FY14 budget. Upper school heads did not identify the addition of the liaison role as a budget priority. In addition, the definition of the family liaison role is currently a focus area within the district, with Dr. Karen Mapp's guidance. Upper school clerks and assistant principals share family engagement activities across upper school campuses.

V. Additional School Psychologists to Provide Full Time Staff at Upper Schools

During SY 2012/13 the upper schools have received four days per week of school psychologist services. Specifically, two school psychologists have been assigned to an upper school, each providing two days of coverage. Over the course of this school year, the Office of Special Education (OSE), working closely with the upper school heads and elementary school principals, has closely monitored the effectiveness of the school psychologist assignments. This is the first year of having split services by school psychologists and there is no evidence that additional staff is required. For SY 2013/14, the district will continue to staff the elementary schools and upper schools with shared school psychologist staff. The OSE will continue to review special education compliance data and solicit input from parents, staff and school administrators in order to make an informed decision regarding the assignment of school psychologists in SY 2014/15.

VI. Additional Language Based Learning Disability Classroom

A new Language Based Learning Disability program was initiated this year. The first classroom in the program, a grade 2/3 class, was opened in September at the Cambridgeport School. The classroom, which is staffed by a teacher and an aide, has the capacity to enroll up to eight students. The first student was assigned to the classroom in mid-October and it is anticipated that an additional two or three students will be enrolled in the classroom prior to the end of the school year. While a second classroom for students in grades 4/5 may eventually be required, the projected enrollment for next year does not indicate a need for this classroom in SY 2013/14.

VII. General Staff Sharing

Specialist staff (visual and performing arts, physical education, health teachers, etc.) will continue to be shared among JK-5 schools and upper school campuses. This allows the district to employ full-time rather than part-time teaching professionals in these areas, and efficiently deploy staff based on the combined number of instructional periods for each specialist area in the overall academic schedule.