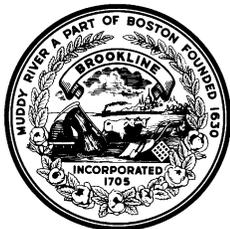


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### **LEGISLATOR UPDATE AND 2025 LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGETARY PRIORITIES**

We are pleased to welcome you to the annual Brookline School Committee Meeting with Legislators. We continue to appreciate your leadership and support on behalf of the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB). PSB is proud to share that the middle school programs at Pierce School (1st), Lawrence School (5th), and Lincoln School (10th) were recently named among the top 10 middle schools in Massachusetts, out of 487 middle schools that were ranked by *US News and World Report*. This success is a testament to our skilled and dedicated educators, combined with our focus on small class sizes and the inherent benefits of a K-8 school system.

Your support of the Massachusetts Literacy Launch initiative is much appreciated. As part of this initiative, PSB participated in DESE's Literacy Academy, which provided resources and professional development to our district leaders and educators. In December, we selected a new, evidence-based K-5 ELA curriculum aligned with the Science of Reading.

We appreciate your support for the expansion of the Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT) program in Massachusetts. The BRYT program started right here in Brookline 20 years ago, through a partnership between the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health and Brookline High School leaders and clinicians. The expansion of the BRYT program will help to serve under-resourced communities across the Commonwealth and provide a safe and supportive environment for high school students transitioning from health care settings to the classroom.

Next door to us here in Town Hall is the John Pierce School, currently being rebuilt. The new building will serve 725 students in a 4-section school, including three early education classrooms. The project also includes improvements to the historic building, which dates to 1855. We are partnering with the Massachusetts School Building Authority on this project, which was supported by Brookline voters in a May 2023 debt override vote. The project is on schedule, with above-ground demolition work scheduled to be completed in late January.

Looking ahead, our focus is on the fiscal health and stability of our school system and the 2025 Legislative and Budgetary Priorities reflect this focus. The town's long range financial plan paints a pessimistic forecast, with anticipated budget deficits not seen in prior years. One-time ARPA funding is coming to an end. This, coupled with increased costs for special education and collective bargaining, continue to put pressure on the school district budget. We are working in partnership with Town leaders to address these challenges.

## Brookline School Committee 2025 Legislative and Budgetary Priorities

**1. Fully fund Special Education:** The provision of special education services continues to put pressure on our annual budget. We advocate for full funding of Special Education costs, an increase in the Circuit Breaker reimbursement to 90%, and insurance participation for medically necessary treatment in school (for example, 1-on-1 nurses). We ask that the approved costs threshold be lowered to \$37,120.

**2. Full funding for the Student Opportunity Act, toward the 7-year statutory requirement:** Federal COVID stimulus funding has made it possible for the legislature to fulfill its commitment to Chapter 70. We urge the legislature to continue that commitment, and to advocate for additional funds at the state level as the federal ARPA funding expires.

**3. Chapter 70 Funding:** We appreciate the school district's Chapter 70 funding in FY25 (\$16,242,217). We advocate for increased funding for Chapter 70 and the Foundation Budget, and request that the inflation factor be calculated into the funding to be more closely aligned to actual economic indicators. Finally, we ask that this funding be determined early in budget deliberations so that we, and school districts across the Commonwealth, will know what we can expect from the new foundation budget.

**4. Full, stable funding for METCO:** We are in support of full, stable funding for METCO. We unanimously supported the Massachusetts Association of School Committee's (MASC) resolution, calling on the Governor to create a stable funding structure to support METCO and its partner districts. We advocate for increased funding for the *METCO Supplemental Special Education Grant* to more fully cover the costs associated with providing special education services to PSB students enrolled through the METCO program.

**5. Prioritize the use of Fair Share Amendment monies for preK-12 education.**