

DRAFT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2022

There have been a great deal of changes in the Public Schools of Brookline since we met last January. We hired a new Superintendent, Dr. Linus Guillory, in July. There have been a number of new hires in senior staff, including Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Lesley Ryan Miller (former principal at Pierce elementary school), and Sam Rippin, Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance. With our new staff and all students back in school full time, we are excited about the 2021/2022 school year.

We are successfully managing COVID; our numbers of cases have been quite low (despite an uptick after Thanksgiving). This success is due to the collaboration of:

- Our outstanding staff: educators and building staff, including nurses, secretarial, custodial and food services staff, and building leaders, and central office.
- An expert panel (epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists, public health experts etc.) who have guided us through the pandemic, and have served as regional and national leaders in school-based guidance.
- The Brookline Mental Health Center has been an important partner in addressing mental health issues.
- Caregivers, as well as the students themselves.

Successful management has also been supported by our strong vaccination rates among eligible students is approximately 90% for our 7-12 graders, as well as staff. We have an agreement with all of our unions that everyone working in the Public Schools will be vaccinated. We are addressing the toll the pandemic has taken both academically and mentally through both social emotional curriculum, newly hired social workers, and working with students to address any academic deficits caused by remote learning.

Using ESSER federal funding, we were able to run a four week project-based “universal summer program” for any Brookline elementary student who wanted to attend, free of charge. There was good attendance and we are hoping to run similar programs again this summer. This program was in addition to other summer programs that PSB runs every summer.

Brookline continues to be busy with school building projects:

- The BHS addition and renovation are nearing completion. When complete, we will have a new STEM wing in the Main Building, a partial renovation of the Tappan Gym, a new MBTA station and a new 9th grade building. These projects will serve the High School population well for a long time.
- The Driscoll School began construction last summer and is progressing well. We were successful in getting Town Meeting to fund geothermal HVAC along with photovoltaics for this project to bring the school close to net zero. The scheduled occupancy of the building is Fall 2023.

- The Pierce School project has finished feasibility and selected a Preferred Schematic Design. We are now awaiting MSBA Board approval to continue to the Design Development stage. We are also planning on this building being as close to net zero as possible taking into consideration that we are reusing the Pierce historic building.

Legislative Issues

1. Fund Chapter 70 using 2019 enrollment: We appreciate the level funding of Chapter 70 for this year (FY22 +\$15,212,527.00) and are hopeful that Chapter 70 funding for FY23 continues to be level funded or increased. Given the complexity of our enrollment forecast, we will need support from the legislature to ensure our total Chapter 70 funding is maintained through a “hold harmless” provision that uses our October 2019 enrollment. Our enrollment has increased slightly from last year, but is still down by nearly 1000 students. Much of the decrease in enrollment has been the international students who are typically here for a few years. Many of whom went home during the pandemic and were not replaced by new students since visas have been hard to come by, but may not be in the coming year.

2. Special Education Funding: We are grateful for the 25% funding for Special Ed transportation which for Brookline was \$300,000 and hope that next year's funding will be increased to 50% as laid out in the Student Opportunity Act. In addition, we continue to lobby for full funding of Special Education costs, along with maximum Circuit Breaker reimbursement and insurance participation for medically necessary treatment in School (e.g.1-on-1 nurses).

2. Universal Pre-K: We believe that there will be funding for universal pre-k whether for 4 year olds or 3 and 4 year olds by the Feds. We want public schools to be part of this program. The Build Back Better bill in Congress has the money being distributed through Health and Human Services and would then go to DEEC in Massachusetts. Our concern is that Public Schools may not be included in the funding.

3. Fair Share Amendment: Update on the Amendment and its impact for Brookline. Where do you think these new funds will be directed? Is there any action that the legislature may take before the vote?

4. Electric Bus grants or subsidies: Explore the possibility of funding for a pilot for Brookline. There apparently was a State pilot for 3 communities in 2018.

5. MCAS Moratorium: We are grateful for the advocacy that led to minimized MCAS for the previous school year (2020-2021) and once again support the legislation put forward for a moratorium on MCAS testing.

6. Virtual Meetings: Legislation to make permanent the March 12, 2020 Open Meeting Law Executive Order allowing remote meetings for the purposes of establishing a quorum and for voting is important for boards and commissions to operate. Remote participation has allowed for the public to be more involved in the work of the School Committee and allowed for greater

flexibility of scheduling and attendance for members – these are all important benefits that will accrue even as the pandemic ends. This legislative initiative is also supported by the Brookline Commission for Women, and more broadly by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (see letter to Senate President Karen E. Spilka and House Speaker Robert DeLeo dated June 30, 2020.)

Add language about Brookline HRP WA10

7. COVID-related Expenses: Funding for COVID-related expenses, while reduced, continues to be an ongoing expense. Items such as surveillance testing, summer remedial programs and PPE are just a few of the extraordinary costs we are experiencing. ESSER funds are helpful to offset this but if expenses continue past any Federal relief, we will need support from the legislature.

8. Menstrual Products Bill -# H565//S1274 We support this legislation and have already begun to make these products available in bathrooms in our schools.

9. Continuing Needs: Thank you for your increased support for METCO, Steps to Success, and the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health. We appreciate it and hope that these will continue to increase in the FY23 Budget.