

**The Public Schools of Brookline  
Superintendent's FY2014 Budget Message  
Addendum #1**

The FY2014 budget development process for The Public Schools of Brookline has already proven to be one of the more difficult in recent memory. Reductions and efficiencies have been proposed to programs and services that many characterize as essential to the heart of a prominent public school system like Brookline. Unfortunately, the situation has improved only marginally since I presented our initial version of the spending plan on Thursday, February 28, 2013.

At this time, we are able to propose the following additional spending reductions, which will result in an additional \$321k becoming available for allocation in our FY2014 proposal.

- Health Insurance. While the revised Group Insurance Commission (GIC) rates (to 3.5%) reduce this overall budget by \$347k, a review of current enrollment in health insurance plans shows that 19 subscribers have been added since January. This reduces the total available for re-allocation to approximately \$173k. Given that the majority of these new subscribers are school employees, our share of the "new" health insurance funds is only \$40k.
- Vision Specialist. We are proposing to reduce this position from 1.0 FTE to .50 FTE to meet service demand, resulting in a savings of \$40k.
- Teacher of the Deaf. Our recommendation includes a reduction in this position from .60 FTE to .50 FTE to meet service demand. The savings from this budget modification is \$6k.
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). The efficiencies achieved through our in-system program will allow for the non-restoration of a vacant .60 FTE position, resulting in a savings of \$30k.
- Contracted Services. The further elimination of certain contracted services (special education) with outside agencies will result in savings of \$55k.
- Social Skills Groups. We are looking to efficiencies in how we staff and structure service delivery in this program. These changes will save \$20k for FY2014.
- Paraprofessional Position. The replacement of a position currently provided by an outside agency with a Brookline paraprofessional will save \$18k.
- High School Sections. We propose eliminating another nine (9) class sections at Brookline High School. Given the reductions already proposed, we will now eliminate a total of fifteen (15) sections for FY2014, resulting in a 3.0 FTE cut. This additional recommendation will save another \$103k.
- Lead Teachers. The original spending plan proposed the addition of lead teacher roles in Winthrop House and the Opportunity for Change (OFC) program. Given that we are now restoring both Coordinator roles (as described below), these positions are no longer needed. The resulting savings is \$10k.

We recommend allocating these newly available funds in the following manner.

- Coordinators. Our original proposal included replacing the Winthrop House and OFC Coordinator roles with one new position. The revised plan includes funding for both of the original coordinator positions. The cost of this modification is \$96k.

- General Education Contingency. We recommend establishing a general education contingency account of \$225k for enrollment increases, additional elementary sections and specialists, and the need for additional sections at Brookline High School.

In addition, as noted in our initial spending plan, we continue to worry about the impact of sequestration or budget reductions at the Federal level. In particular, the possible reductions in IDEA (special education) of \$120k and Title I of \$29k would be difficult to absorb.

I am, therefore, very pleased to report that the Town Administrator has recommended that the Town share of health insurance savings (\$133k) be re-allocated to the Reserve Fund to protect against potential impacts from possible reductions to Federal aid.

School Committee members are justifiably concerned about many of the reductions that are proposed in my FY2014 spending plan. As a result, many proposals to generate additional revenue were discussed at the recent (Monday, March 11, 2013) Finance Subcommittee meeting. Two of the more promising ideas are discussed below.

1. While current School Committee policy does not allow for parents or community groups to pay for staff salaries (except where expressly approved by the Committee, as in the case of the 21st Century Fund), the Committee could vote to allow such an effort to achieve the \$201k Enrichment and Challenge Support (ECS) restoration proposal under the following conditions: (a) The monies were raised on a "one time only" basis to provide the School Committee time to review the program and look for future revenue supports; (b) the monies are donated to a third party such as the Brookline Community Fund (BCF) and are earmarked for a system-wide program, not an individual school or teacher; and (c) no decisions are made about restoring the program until and unless the full amount needed has been raised.
2. Although Brookline implemented a full-day kindergarten program for all students thirteen (13) years ago, the law does not require the district to provide more than the half-day option free of charge. As we discussed, the Committee could entertain the possibility of charging a fee for families who wish to access the full day option beginning next September. This would require us to offer a half-day Kindergarten option for those not interested in paying for the service, and of course we would establish a scholarship program for those needing financial assistance for the full day fee.

While we do not recommend either of these options, the Administration stands ready to provide the School Committee with additional information, including an implementation plan, for either or both options on or before our March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting.

As always, we look forward to continuing to provide elected officials, appointed representatives, and the community with additional information and recommendations concerning the FY2014 spending plan as it becomes available.