

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE  
FY 2017 SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUDGET DEVELOPMENT  
GUIDELINES AND PRIORITIES**

The Brookline School Committee (BSC) is responsible for approving and overseeing the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) annual budget. In accordance with those responsibilities, the BSC annual process begins with this statement of priorities and guidelines to inform the Superintendent's initial construction of a budget for the next fiscal year. While we typically finalize these guidelines in early winter, we are piloting a new process to accelerate our development of the FY2017 budget. This should allow greater opportunities for planning among educators and coordination with the overall Town of Brookline budget.

**BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES**

The budget should serve to accomplish the Public Schools of Brookline **Strategic Plan Goals**:

1. Every Student Achieving
2. Every Student Invested in Learning
3. Every Student Prepared for Change and Challenge
4. Every Educator Growing Professionally

The BSC urges the Administration to follow these **best practice principles** for budget development:

1. Emphasize transparency and accountability in the development, presentation, and management of the annual budget, with expenditures and/or reductions expressed in a format readily understandable by the public.
2. Describe the effect on the teaching and learning experience (i.e. students, families, and staff) of any proposed budget changes that are substantive (increases and decreases).
3. Minimize reliance on one-time revenues for ongoing operating budget needs.
4. Plan adequate contingency funds for uncertainties and fluctuations in known areas of budget pressure such as (but not limited to) enrollment, special education, and State budget commitments.
5. Maintain solvency within Revolving funds (such as school lunches and adult education).
6. Seek savings through efficiencies within existing programming and/or staffing before seeking additional revenue, provided the proposed change(s) achieve both sustainable improvements in teaching and learning as well as operational efficiencies.
7. Continue the sustainable growth budget model urged by the 2007 Override Study Committee (OSC), approved by the BSC in 2008, and affirmed by the 2014 OSC: ... "consistent with our obligations to engage in good faith bargaining pursuant to M.G.L.c. 150E, [the BSC will] incorporate into our approach to bargaining in the coming year the approach recommended in the Override Study Committee Report of January 2008 on managing total personnel costs, so that the combination of salaries, employee health benefits, and staffing levels grow at a sustainable rate."

**BUDGET DEVELOPMENT CURRENT CONDITIONS & PRIORITIES**

The budget should remain consistent with the investment priorities outlined by the PSB for the override voted on May 5, 2015, and in particular **maintain the BSC's ongoing commitments** to:

1. Low student-to-teacher ratios, especially in the early grades;
2. Program Review—a periodic fact-based evaluation and revision of our core programs for students—a key priority this year is the implementation of the restructured ECS program;
3. Student and staff diversity and equity, including but not limited to the METCO program;
4. District-wide capacity to collect, analyze, and use student assessment data to understand both individual student growth and longitudinal trends for the district;

5. Evidence-based student achievement initiatives such as the Literacy Initiative, the Benchmark Assessment System, the Calculus Project, and training for inclusion in collaboration with the Landmark School;
6. Robust art, music, foreign language, and physical education as part of the school day.

The budget should also reflect the following current conditions and priorities:

1. **Special Education:** The PSB should continue to invest in high quality in-district programming and inclusion classrooms for students with special needs, as well as identify targeted investments and innovations in district-wide programs.
2. **Collective Bargaining:** The BSC approved one-year collective bargaining agreements with all its unions to cover Fiscal Year 2015, but those contracts have all expired as of September 1, 2015. We are currently in negotiations for a new multi-year Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Brookline School Committee and the Brookline Educators Union (BEU). The budget should reflect new contracts consistent with the sustainable growth budget model indicated above.
3. **State Mandates:** The BSC expects the PSB to continue to budget to meet the demands of various mandated initiatives. Mandated initiatives for 2017 will include:
  - a. **Educator Evaluation.** Piloted in 2013-14 with system-wide implementation in 2014-15, the new system requires changes in both training and supervision, with additional implications for personnel hiring and assignment. Commitment to evaluation and development for our teachers and school leaders is a critically important pillar of our educational system.
  - b. **Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL).** All licensed educators are required (teacher and administrators) to earn a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Teacher Endorsement. Most educators earn their RETELL SEI Teacher Endorsement by completing the 45-hour graduate-level Teacher Endorsement course.
  - c. **Special Revenue Funds.** Review and analyze the sustainability of reliance on these funds for basic and specialized program needs.
4. **Educational Technology:** This includes key investments required for phased implementation of a robust and flexible technology infrastructure:
  - a. Innovative approaches to teaching and learning, and equitable and universal access to advanced technology for all our students in a growing School population
  - b. Financial implications of changes to the Information Technology governance structure between the PSB and the Town of Brookline
  - c. Costs of implementing and supporting a new testing system, acknowledging there remains uncertainty about the Commonwealth's participation in the Partnership for Assessment and Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

Submitted by the Brookline School Committee as voted on September 24, 2015.

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