



NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

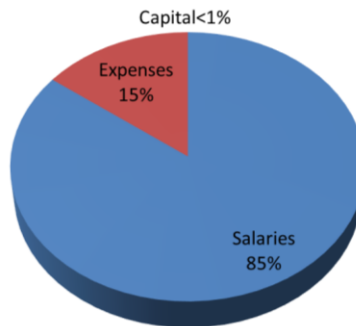
1330 Highland Avenue
Needham, MA 02492

March 7, 2023

Dear Town Meeting Members,

In consultation with Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick and the Town of Needham Finance Committee, the School Committee presents the FY24 operating budget request. The proposed plan totals **\$92,155,973** and represents a nearly **\$4.9 million, 5.6% increase** over the current budget year.

FY 2024
School Committee Recommended Operating
Budget Expenditures by Line Item Category
\$92,155,973



Budget Priorities

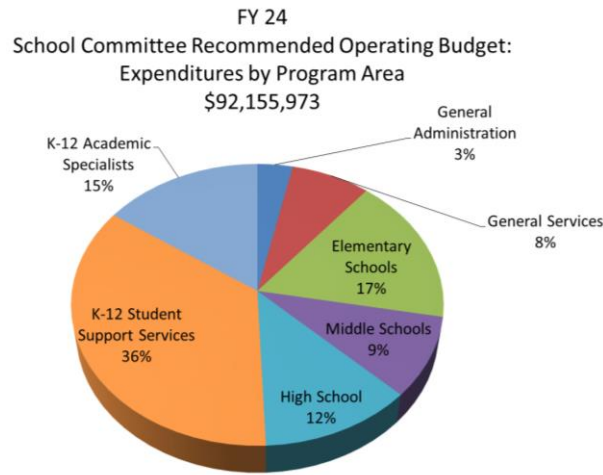
Since 2019, our primary strategic priorities have been guided by our *Portrait of a Needham Graduate*. In the FY24 budget, we will:

- Provide resources to address both the learning needs and the social and emotional health needs of all students, which are additionally challenged by lingering effects of the Pandemic;
- Ensure targeted interventions at elementary and middle levels and consistent Time On Learning in elementary schools to support all learners;
- Continue to refine the ongoing work of curriculum, instruction and assessment priorities;
- Continue to develop and maintain educational resources and a technology infrastructure that supports student learning and meets District goals; and
- Continue to do all of these with a continued emphasis on equity, inclusion, diversity and anti-racism.

Budget Request Highlights

This request of \$92.2 million provides the resources required to address existing staff contractual obligations, meet enrollment growth and special education needs, and implement the District's *Portrait of a Needham Graduate* Five-Year Strategic Plan. In addition, the budget plan provides the resources

we require to continue to meet ongoing student needs resulting from disrupted learning during the Pandemic, social and emotional challenges, and to address equity needs and interventions.



FTE's

The proposed budget includes an increase of 14.33 Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) – of which all but one is required to maintain the current level of service to our students. The proposed new High School Guidance Department Chair is the exception, and would better address the unique needs of high school students with transcript concerns, graduation requirements, student issues, and post-high school anxiety.

Elementary School

At the elementary level, the proposal includes the additional resources and staffing needed to: maintain elementary class sizes at or below School Committee policy guidelines (of 22 students per classroom at Eliot and Sunita Williams); staff an elementary schedule that optimizes consistent learning time with homeroom teachers for all students (i.e., Spanish, Wellness, Music); provide more leadership support (Eliot, Mitchell); address curricular needs through a reading screener and digital licenses; and provide additional and targeted special education and counseling support.

Middle School

At the middle school level, the proposal includes additional resources and staffing to do the following: provide enhanced special education, counseling, and part-time nursing services, including a new Intensive Learning Center (ILC) classroom (Pollard); continue funding for a part-time literacy specialist (High Rock); and provide staff for lunch monitoring.

High School

At the high school level, resources and staffing are proposed to: maintain elective offerings, including part-time teachers for English, Science, Social Studies, and Theater; bolster special education, psychology, and nursing supports; create a new High School Guidance Department Chair; create new stipends to support clubs and co-curricular activities; and provide additional financial resources for athletics.

Services At All Levels

At a district level, we include a third installment of the budget funds needed to replace technology and one-to one devices issued during the Pandemic; for resources to attract and retain bus drivers, transportation nurses, and substitute teachers; for an anticipated increase for out-of-district tuition and

related transportation costs; to continue our survey tool subscription; to provide an additional yellow school bus for transportation; and to expand services for our Preschool, including staff for an additional classroom and their related services.

The budget plan also addresses the District's need to meet ongoing student needs resulting from disrupted learning and address equity needs, increased salaries to maintain services and provide reasonable, fair, and competitive wages (given current inflationary rates), as well as the State's unilateral tuition increase for students enrolled in special education private schools. Additionally, the plan provides the remaining half of funding needed for Summer Bridges staffing costs.

Contractual Salary Increases

Negotiated contracts for all existing employees account for \$2.8 million of the total requested increase. Needham provides reasonable, yet competitive, salaries that enable us to recruit, support and retain our talented and increasingly diverse faculty and staff. This year, the School Committee is negotiating new collective bargaining agreements with Units C, D, and E, which includes teaching assistants, administrative support, and cafeteria staff, and we strive for fair and competitive wage and salary adjustments. A modest cost of living adjustment is included for these employees, as well as for non-union employees.

Out of District Tuition

Out of District tuition and transportation expenses increase by \$521,962 in FY24, including \$194,962 for tuition and \$327,000 for transportation.

- Total tuition costs increase by \$1,313,722 over the prior year, reflecting the effect of a state-mandated 14% cost of living adjustment for private school tuitions in FY24 (which added \$1,005,763 to tuition expenses), other state-approved rate adjustments (totaling \$210,947) and student placement changes (which added \$97,012 in net expense). These additional expenses are offset by an anticipated increase in Circuit Breaker reimbursement of \$970,122 and \$148,637 in 'budget capacity' within the tuition line item. The net required increase of \$194,962 is included within the recommended FY24 operating budget request.
- Out of district transportation costs increase by \$327,000. Although ridership remains relatively steady at 70-75 students, due to changes in student placements, there are now larger number of students being transported as singleton riders than in the past, as well as students being transported longer distances at higher rates. The FY24 budget reflects these changes, as well as a modest 2% rate increase for our contract services provider.

Capital Requests for FY24

The FY24 requested capital budget request totals \$2,448,525. Funds are requested for technology and equipment replacement, and for feasibility designs for Master Plan Facilities Projects. These additional requests include:

- \$460,750 for school technology;
- \$143,396 for school vehicle replacement;
- \$69,379 for copier replacement;
- \$25,000 for school furniture replacement; and
- \$1.75 million for a feasibility design for Pollard Middle (Master Plan Option D.)

Additional funding for school technology, vehicle replacement, copier replacement, and furniture replacement is requested in FY25-28, as part of the five-year capital improvement plan request, totaling \$7,919,083. Additionally, the five-year plan includes \$1.5 million in alternative placeholder feasibility design funding for Mitchell School (Master Plan Option A) in FY24.

Finally, the School Department supports the school-related operating and capital facility requests submitted by the Town's Building Maintenance Department, including:

- \$1 million in ongoing support for the Facilities Maintenance Warrant Article;
- \$9 million in construction funds for the Rooftop Unit Replacements at the Broadmeadow and Eliot Schools;
- \$250,000 in construction funds through the Energy Efficiency Article to fund the replacement of a boiler at Needham High School; and
- \$66,306 for additional custodial support in school and Town buildings

Looking Forward

The 2022-2023 school year has been one of both monumental challenges and continual transitions. Yet, in spite of the ongoing pandemic, our students, teachers, and staff have continued to work towards the vision outlined in the *Portrait of a Needham Graduate*. We are enormously grateful to our families, staff and students. We are also so grateful to our partners across the Needham community, including the Select Board, the Town Manager, the Board of Health, the Finance Committee, and Town Meeting for their engagement, support, and partnership throughout this year. This budget request, we believe, will provide the resources for our District to further this challenging work into the 2023-2024 school year. We respectfully ask for Town Meeting's support of our operating and capital budgets, as proposed.

Please reach out to me at matthew_spengler@needham.k12.ma.us should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Matthew Spengler
Chair, Needham School Committee ('25)