

FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 13, 2014

4:30 PM

School Administration Building

417 Rock Street

Fall River, MA 02720

AGENDA

Finance Subcommittee Workshop

- Fall River Public Schools Budget
- Budget for Group 1 Elementary Schools (Doran, Spencer Borden, Viveiros, Greene)

MINUTES

At 4:33 PM Mrs. Panchley, Chair of the subcommittee, read the open meeting law.

Mrs. Panchley then called to order the meeting of the Finance Subcommittee for Thursday, March 13, 2014. A roll call for attendance showed Mrs. Panchley was present. Mr. Costa and Mr. Hart were absent; however, Mr. Martins served as a substitute.

Also present were Superintendent Mayo-Brown, Mr. Michael Saunders, Dr. Fran Roy, Ms. Ivone Medeiros, Mr. Tom Coogan, Mr. John Nunes, Mr. Kevin Almeida, Ms. Maureen Cote, Principal Christ, Principal Pontes, Principal Jocelyn, Principal Ward, Principal Bretz, Principal Raposo, Mr. Kyle Grandfield and members of the press.

Mrs. Panchley explained that she was fairly new to the process; however, she is fairly informal and the purpose of the meeting is to hear more about the schools and the need for changes in personnel if necessary so that it will be easier for the Committee to rationalize as they go through the budget process.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said that this was an opportunity to educate the public as well as those present as to how they went about developing the budget, what their preliminary numbers are looking like at that point, and set the context. She noted that this is the first meeting of a series of meetings that the Finance Subcommittee will have to be able to hear directly from principals regarding budgets they have put together in order to meet the needs of their diverse student populations in each of their schools. She added that they will see that their budgets are very specific to their individual schools based on what they feel is necessary to accelerate student achievement.

The Superintendent continued that for the past five years they have presented the School Committee, in draft form, a level service budget and that is what they are doing again with this series of meetings. She said that level-service means that there will be no cuts to staff or programs. All 10,500 students will receive the same level of service for the next fiscal year. The operating budget is \$96M which is what represents the amount of money that the school department is requesting in order to have a level service budget and to reduce class sizes based on the School Committee's vote to re-open Henry Lord.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE: School Committeeman Andrade entered the meeting at 4:37 PM.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown explained that opening Henry Lord includes 21 classroom teachers and would make it the second PreK-8 school in the district. They are planning on opening in September with PreK-6 and the budget does include those types of classroom positions.

She noted that the Committee makes a significant investment in secondary education. There is still a wide gap (roughly 28% difference) in the per pupil amount difference between secondary and elementary. The House and Senate have agreed upon Chapter 70 aid so that they can plan accordingly. The Chapter 70 amount for Fall River is almost \$103M which represents a \$2.7M increase in order to help the City to meet its net school spending requirement which has also gone up. Superintendent Mayo-Brown explained that net school spending is an amount that the Commonwealth sets for every city and town and determines the minimum amount that is to be expended on education in each city and town. Fall River's net school spending amount is almost \$127M which includes indirect costs such as employee/retired employee health care, a percentage of city services, etc. The net school spending number is what they need to think about in terms of the total expenditure on education. The \$96M represents specifically what they have in their binders, which is what it takes to operate the school system.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she thinks most important for the FY15 budget is that they are proposing to maintain all of their personnel which is 80% of their budget. "Human capital is our greatest asset. I would say there is no more difficult job than being a classroom teacher so we want to be sure that we support teachers and have enough teachers to really be able to deliver a high quality instructional experience for our students. The School Committee has made significant investments in social-emotional learning because we all recognize that our students need to be ready to learn and that it doesn't really matter the amount of money you put on the instructional side if we are not supporting our students mental health, behavioral, and social-emotional needs."

The Superintendent closed by saying that the City has received a return on its investment in terms of educational spending; the graduation rate continues to climb, they have made progress and accelerate learning in a number of areas and credit that work to the classroom teachers as well as the school leaders who are supporting teachers.

At 4:41 PM Viveiros Elementary School Principal, Meg Christ presented:

She thanked the School Committee for their support and recognized the dedicated staff at the Viveiros School.

About the school:

- Expanded Learning Time (ELT) School
- Embedded wrap-around service model focused on academic achievement and social-emotional growth
- Teaming through the T3 project which includes a focus of building the capacity of their teachers on their craft. There is more time for teachers to come together to collaborate to plan instruction and look at data and that model has impacted student achievement across the school.
- Instructional Leadership Team: 12 members from staff on the team; they meet monthly to look at data, review protocol/procedures, professional development (PD), align goals, and be sure targets are being met.

- MCAS student performance: They made steady growth and are focused on one sub-group. PD has been aligned to support the specific needs of that subgroup. They had almost a 50% increase in the ELL subgroup from September to present.
- Staff participating in RETELL – hoping for 75% by the end of the year and that Special Educators will have participated in targeted PD.
- 90 minutes of Professional Learning Time (PLT) for teachers. Part of being an ELT school is that there is more time for teacher collaboration. This year they changed from a 48 minute period to a 90 minute period to provide more time for teachers to collaborate and leave the table with a solid plan. They also have a strong group of paraprofessionals who have also been trained around the social-emotional curriculum so when the teachers are away, the paraprofessionals are working with the students around that.
- PD every Wednesday for 90 minutes. Aligned to the teachers' goals.
- Attendance: Somewhat of a difficult time this year; they have a plan in place for that.
- Focused on increasing parent involvement: holding monthly events at the school as well as RTI which includes parents in their child's education.

Budget:

- Would like to convert the K/1 teacher position to an ESL interventionist to support the increase in that population. Currently they have one ESL teacher servicing 82 children.
- Would like to sustain their T3 partnership; eliminate the science T3 teacher-leader (not the person, just the position) and convert it to a T3 Kindergarten teacher-leader. Two of their teachers currently sit on the district-wide science curriculum team.

Mrs. Panchley and Mrs. Christ had conversation about what T3 teachers' roles are.

Mrs. Christ also noted that they are a five unit school.

Transcriber's Note: Mr. Costa arrived at 4:53 PM.

Mr. Martins asked about their goals.

Ms. Christ said that the MCAS student performance goals are there and they met their targets except for the special education subgroup; professional development has been aligned to teacher goals as well as the needs of the school.

Mr. Martins and Mrs. Christ had a discussion regarding her goals and CPI (Composite Performance Index).

Mrs. Christ noted that they have a special populations T3 teacher leader because of the needs of that particular subgroup in the building.

Mr. Martins said her budget is realistically put together to achieve her ELA target.

Mrs. Christ agreed. She added that they do have a literacy coach at their school who has provided professional development that has aligned to exactly what the needs are at the school and the district.

Mr. Martins said his philosophy is that they will gladly give the money and resources they are asking for but expects that target levels are achieved in return.

Mrs. Panchley and Mr. Costa had no other questions.

At 4:59 PM Doran Elementary School Principal, Maria Pontes presented:

She thanked everyone and noted that Doran has had a long and arduous journey and could not have gotten to where they are without the hard work of their staff and the support of the community. Doran is an example of what can happen when there is collaboration at the school, district, school committee and state levels.

About the school:

- 563 students
- PreK-8 and first year with a full compliment
- 2 unit model with the exception of a bubble in 3 through 5
- 116 special needs students including 3 sub-separate classrooms that are district placement classrooms for students with emotional and behavioral disorders.
- 106 LEP students who are integrated and the supports are pushed in from the ESL staff
- Staffing: 26 classrooms; 3 inclusion teachers who service students on IEPs; 3 ESL support staff; 2 full-time interventionists who are primarily servicing students in K-2 because of the need
- Administrative structure: Principal, Vice-Principal, ELA department head. They had a math department head which was vacant and has not been filled but they have a redesign coach who has filled in for the math duties.
- Wellness: School Committee has invested heavily at the Doran. They have 2 school adjustment counselors, a student support coordinator, and a full-time parent outreach worker.
- Class size: K has fluctuated between 29 and 32 all year; 1st grade has 31 and 32; 2nd grade has 28 and 28.
- Redesign focus was on building teacher capacity.
- They have a very young staff; 21 of 39 do not have professional status.
- Have focused on differentiated professional development and additional PD time was negotiated for Doran.
- Responsive classroom school
- Guided discipline for the middle school
- Extended learning/additional one hour (not technically an ELT school)

Budget:

- They are not asking for additional positions
- Asking for an additional interventionist with the FTE that will open up as they close another grade (unit). Ms. Pontes explained that she currently has two interventionist servicing students in grades K-2 only. There is a high need in grades 3-5 they would like to service so by the time they are in middle school, they don't have huge gaps.

Ms. Pontes noted that they are in their last year of their redesign and needed to plan for sustainability. They have invested a great deal in technology, software and hardware, classroom libraries, resources for teachers.

She added that they are working on closing the gap with their special needs sub-group as they are the only group that did not meet targets.

Mrs. Panchley asked if they work with the teachers who do not have professional status.

Ms. Pontes explained that teachers are eligible for professional status in their fourth year and that the evaluation tool has played a big role in building their teachers' capacity. Their goal is to stabilize their adult population.

Mrs. Panchley said on her walk-through visits Principals have commented on "great" teachers and her hope is that the district can keep those teachers.

Mr. Costa asked if the strategy was to use the interventionist that she is requesting on the sub-group that didn't meet their targets.

Ms. Pontes said it would be wherever there is a need and dependent on the data. Some are special needs students and some are not. They are trying to intervene before they become special needs students.

Mr. Costa asked what percentage of the intervention is going to work with the special education sub-group.

Ms. Pontes said that there is an overlap meaning that many students that are struggling are special needs or ELL students who have a lot of gaps to close. They would be working with those students but she did not want to say that it is just that sub-group.

Mr. Costa explained that he asked the question because at some point he is going to have to defend new positions, increases or conversions of positions. If the interventionist is going to be used to address the issue of that sub-group not meeting their targets, it makes his stance on the issue stronger.

Ms. Pontes said that at minimum, 30% of their population need additional academic support. They are using the interventionists at K-2 to prevent them from falling behind; however, there are kids in 3-5 who have gaps that need to be closed.

Mr. Costa said he trusts her judgment and doesn't have a problem advocating for resources when he knows there is a benefit for them. He just needed a clearer understanding of the conversion and what that interventionist is going to be used for so that he is able to answer questions asked of him.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown added that the only thing preventing Doran from becoming a Level 1 school is that sub-group. If the school meets their targets for all their sub-groups, it is a Level 1 school.

Ms. Pontes said she can give them data of which students qualify for Tier 3 at every grade level and of those students, how many are being supported currently and how many are not getting those services.

Mr. Costa asked her if she could provide that before they take final action on this year's budget so he has it for supportive documentation.

Mrs. Panchley said they don't want schools that have been brought up to come down so it is important for them to know what schools need to keep schools up and rising.

Ms. Pontes said she would label their school as fragile as they just exited Level 4 and have a lot of work to do. She added that just because they are not Level 4, does not mean their needs have changed. They need to sustain and exceed the supports.

Mr. Andrade asked how interventionists operate.

Ms. Pontes explained that it depends on the circumstances but they have a period that is intervention academic support because of their extended hour. She said it defeats the purpose to pull students out of class to give them academic support and have them miss the core instruction. Sometimes they go into the classroom and do tandem teaching.

Mr. Martins said he does not see a goal for science and went over some of the data.

Mrs. Pontes said being Level 4; their focus was meeting their goals in ELA and math. They just now started to focus on science and departmentalized grades 3 and up so that they can have targeted science instruction. She added that Mr. Martins was correct that the science data is not good.

At 5:22 PM Spencer Borden Elementary School Principal, Michael Ward presented:

He thanked them for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Spencer Borden community and thanked the staff at the school.

About the school:

- Veteran staff
- Mr. Ward took over 4 years ago
- High performing school (Level 1); need to stick with sustainability
- 3 unit school
- 2 half day Pre-K classrooms
- 5 district classrooms, one being an autistic classroom
- 2 instructional coaches
- 1 full-time interventionist
- Administrative structure: Principal, Asst. Principal, 1.5 SAC
- 30 paraprofessionals due to the type of classrooms they have
- 585 students
- 150 special needs (26%)
- They do not have a large LEP population (3%)
- 64% free/reduced lunch

How to sustain performance:

- Quality instruction
- Staff professional development
- District Capacity Project district-wide
- Common Planning
- Learning Walks
- Continue with instructional shifts
- In relation to ELA, they are looking at the type of questions they are posing to children in the classrooms and having children being held accountable for it; need to let children answer questions given to them.
- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Parent Involvement

Budget:

- Asking for a full-time interventionist to be added

Mr. Ward explained that two years ago they had two literacy coaches and one was converted to an ELA interventionist. They are meeting all of their sub-groups. He is looking for a math interventionist because he has a math instructional coach who is there to get into the classrooms and assist the teachers and give them PD; but he is also asking her, at the same time, to come up with ways they can provide extra interventions for teachers in the classroom. He is hoping to take that responsibility off of her plate and get her back into the classrooms. He added that he feels he is being greedy but is being pro-active to make sure that they continue to meet targets, especially in the upper grades.

Mr. Costa said he is appreciative of Mr. Ward's rationale for the interventionist which speaks to the needs of his school. Ultimately, it is going to come down to whether or not the Committee and community wants to continue to invest where it is needed; not only to fix the schools that are broken but also to support them so they can continue to make progress. He added that he is supportive of resources where the needs are and that Mr. Ward is not a Principal who typically goes to them asking for additions.

Mrs. Panchley asked how many classes had 30+ students.

Transcriber's Note: Mr. Hart arrived at 5:32 PM.

Mr. Saunders said that Spencer Borden has three currently.

Mrs. Panchley said it makes a difference when they are looking at what kinds of things they are going to be able to provide.

Mr. Costa asked if he knew which three classes had 30+.

Mr. Ward said it is 1 Kindergarten and 2 First Grades.

Mr. Costa said if they have overcrowding in the early elementary grades, they are building a house on rocky foundation and that is not the approach he feels they should be taking.

Mrs. Panchley noted that the schools that are present had classes that have 30+ students with most being in K-2:

Greene:	11	Spencer Borden:	3
Viveiros:	6	Doran:	4

Mr. Martins said that with the new Henry Lord PreK-8 coming online, that should alleviate that problem.

Mrs. Panchley said it would help somewhat with the South End schools but would not affect the North End schools too much.

Mr. Martins questioned Mr. Ward about not having a goal for science and asked when science becomes part of graduation requirements for MCAS.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said it is in the high school currently with it starting with the Class of 2016.

Mr. Martins noted that Spencer Borden just needed to maintain their scores; however, he questioned again the lack of a science goal.

Mr. Ward responded that Mr. Martins was correct in that there was not a goal for science but that he could get one in there for him.

Mr. Costa agreed that there should be a goal in there whether it is to sustain or improve.

At 5:40 PM Greene Elementary School Principal, Joel Jocelyn presented:

He thanked the School Committee for the support they have provided his school as well as the staff at the school.

About the school:

- Moved from a Level 3 to a Level 1 school within a year through the work of the staff
- 845 students – second largest school in Fall River after Durfee
- Class sizes are high but teachers don't complain
- 26% special needs
- This year they have a number of community based MCAS-ALT that will be moving to the actual MCAS so they expect to take a little bit of a hit on their numbers but they have provided additional supports for those students.
- Continuing to enhance their Tier 1 instruction through professional development
- Major areas of focus currently is small group instruction and student discourse in the classroom
- 49 teachers
- 4 interventionists (1 reading K-2; 1 math K-2; 1 ELA 3-5, 1 math 3-5)
- Focused on hiring quality teachers
- Tier 2 approach/focusing on small group instruction
- Embedding RTI process
- Biggest challenge with number of students:
Administrative: Principal, Vice-Principal, Dean of Students, Math Department Head, 1.5 SAC
- District has implemented Play Works which is yielding a result/# of nurse visits dropped dramatically
- Responsive classroom school: yielding results to the point where they have barely any behavioral issues in grades 3-5 but do have a lot of intensive behavior needs in K-1

Budget:

- Asking that the SAC position approved the previous year that they never had an opportunity to fill be converted to a Behavior Therapist due to the needs in the early grades. The therapist would be able to work with students and go into the classrooms and support the teachers with behavior management strategies they could use.
- Asking to convert one of their literacy coaches to have that person support and get more depth from the evaluation process.

Mrs. Panchley said that she is supportive of the department head model because their ability to evaluate is a plus as well as being able to coach.

Mr. Hart asked what the role of the interventionist is.

Mr. Jocelyn explained that they are certified teachers who work with academically challenged students to help boost their ability.

Mr. Hart asked how the parent involvement is.

Mr. Jocelyn said they have quite a bit. A few things they have found successful are:

- Involving parents in RTI
- Every two months – big awards ceremony where a big deal is made with invitations, etc.
- One literacy night and one math night where teachers put together lessons to show the parents how to teach their children

Mr. Martins said he appreciated that Mr. Jocelyn had all his goals (math/ELA/science) and said they seem set in ELA & math for their goals but have work to do in science.

Mr. Jocelyn agreed and explained that they departmentalized science the previous year but started late because they couldn't find a teacher and ended up with almost doubling their science scores.

Mr. Martins said that science is a graduation requirement starting with the Class of 2016 and a foundation needs to be set.

Mrs. Panchley asked Madame Superintendent if she had anything to say in closing and she did not.

Mr. Martins said he had one other question and asked Mr. Saunders with the transfer of funds on the various lines of the budget for transportation, would they still meet net school spending.

Mr. Saunders responded that they would not.

Mr. Martins said he would take it up at the next regular School Committee meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Costa – Mr. Hart: To adjourn.

All were in favor

None Opposed

Meeting adjourned at 6:00PM

Respectfully submitted,



Interim Administrative Assistant for
School Committee Services

Please note: A videotape/DVD of this meeting is on file in the School Committee Office and is available for review by contacting the Interim Administrative Assistant for School Committee Services.