



NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1330 Highland Avenue
Needham, MA 02492

May 1, 2022

Dear Town Meeting Members,

In consultation with Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick and the Town of Needham Finance Committee, the School Committee presents the FY23 operating budget request. The proposed plan totals **\$87,277,798** and represents a nearly **\$3.7 million, 4.4% increase** over the current budget year.

FY 2023
School Committee Recommended Operating
Budget Expenditures by Line Item Category
\$87,277,798



The proposed FY23 budget increases include:

- Contractual Salary Increases: \$1,858,890
- Level Service: \$612,213
- Program Improvements: \$1,203,298

The proposed budget includes an **increase of 25.82 Full Time Equivalents (FTE)** – almost all of whom are already employed by Needham Public Schools, but whose FY '22 costs are covered by temporary COVID-19 grant funding; this funding is no longer available for FY '23 but the positions remain necessary for continued student support.

Particular challenges in developing the FY23 budget, for our 5,526 students and over 800 staff, include:

- Continuing full in-person school learning while managing continued health and safety needs in the changing landscape of COVID-19;
- Increased student needs, especially for our most vulnerable students, even though enrollment is temporarily decreased due Covid-19;
- Expanding maintenance, renovation, and construction needs for our school buildings, which have required significant and ongoing attention, funding, and management;
- Refining our focus on equity, inclusion and anti-racism; and
- Maintaining our *Portrait of a Needham Graduate* strategic priorities

Budget Priorities

Since 2019, our primary strategic priorities have been guided by our *Portrait of a Needham Graduate*. In the FY23 budget, we will:

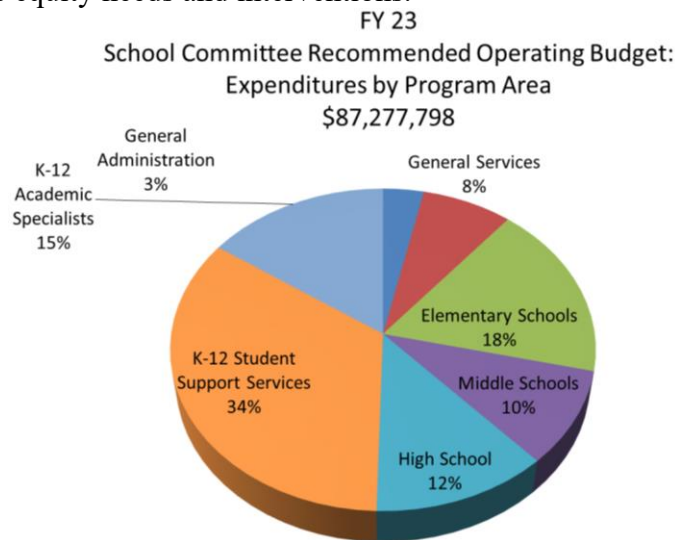
- Provide resources to address both the learning needs and the social and emotional health needs of all students, which are additionally challenged by lingering effects of the pandemic;
- Ensure targeted interventions at elementary and middle levels and consistent time on learning in elementary schools 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
- To do all of these with a continued emphasis on equity, inclusion, diversity and anti-racism.

How does the FY23 budget benefit students?

The largest portion of the budget provides for salaries for staff and ensures that our students are learning in classrooms with a talented and increasingly diverse faculty where the student-to-teacher ratio in Grades to K-12 is approximately 18-20. The budget provides for targeted support for English Language Learner students and students requiring math and literacy assistance. It ensures that all students have access to learning and co-curricular activities that are inclusive and reduces the need for payment of participation fees. The budget provides the materials, technology needs and counseling resources required by students to learn, achieve and grow.

Budget Request Highlights

This request of \$87.3 million provides the resources required to address existing staff contractual obligations, enrollment growth, special education needs, and 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, social and emotional challenges, and to address equity needs and interventions.



Special Education

There is no request for increase in Special Education Tuition in this FY23 request, despite a gradually increasing enrollment of students with disabilities. There are several reasons for the stable tuition request:

- The district has worked to provide in-district programs for a number of students, such that fewer students require services out of district. In 2021, 7.6% of our students participate in out-of-district programs, compared with 8.45% in 2020.
- Students have reached the age where they no longer receive Special Education programming.
- Circuit breaker funds from the State came in higher than expected.

Note that a number of the aforementioned FTEs are requested to continue to meet the needs of our in-district Special Education Students.

Elementary School

Elementary requests focus on targeted interventions with students in Math and Literacy, teaching assistants for student support, special education faculty, additional counselling, and funds for the Summer Bridges program, which serves our most vulnerable learners to prevent their losing ground during the summer. Funds are also included to eliminate fees for the elementary instrumental program, an additional step as we continue efforts to remove barriers to equitable student participation. Finally, elementary schools aim to continue refining and optimizing the elementary schedule to provide consistent time on learning for students.

Middle School

The FY23 middle school budget requests additional support for counselling and nursing, math and literal interventions, an online math intervention program, and stipends to support equity, inclusion and antiracism.

High School

Additional staff are requested for Special Education and in English Language Learning. Funds for support in equity, inclusion and anti-racism, and athletic parity are also requested in the budget. Funds to cover fees previously covered by students (such as for the STAMP Seal of Biliteracy Program) will allow for all students to participate on equal footing.

Services At All Levels

Requests include:

- Additional funds in our athletic budget to avoid fee increases. Over 1,200 students participate in over 100 athletic teams at the middle and high school levels, and we aim for the most level financial playing field possible for equitable participation.
- Additional administrative support for our Fine and Performing Arts Department (FPA), where both the number of participating students and the number of events have increased markedly over the years; (0.5 FTE for FPA Operations Coordinator).
- An additional instructional coach (0.4 FTE) for K-12 World Languages, where currently a single Work Languages Director supervises, plans for, and evaluates 33 World Language teachers
- Funds for Curriculum and Professional Development for K-5 Social Studies and World Languages
- Funds to support technology replacement and to purchase budgeting software.
- Funds to retain and support bus drivers: hiring and retention of our critical bus driver positions have been very difficult as a byproduct of the pandemic.

Contractual Salary Increases

Negotiated contracts for all existing employees account for \$1.9 million (51%) 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 teachers (Unit A) and administrators (Unit B), 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.

Capital Requests for FY23

The FY23 recommended school capital budget request totals \$20,023,375. These requests include:

- \$437,000 for school technology
- \$108,100 for school vehicle replacement
- \$53,275 for copier replacement
- \$25,000 for school furniture replacement
- \$19,400,000 Emery Grover School Administration building construction funds

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

- \$101,369 for an HVAC Supervisor position
- \$58,048 for additional custodial support in school and Town buildings
- \$4,461 for DPW overtime support at NHS on athletics game days
- \$2,750 for Recycling & Transfer Station overtime support to address the additional trash created on school Early Release Days
- \$1,000,000 in ongoing support for the Facilities Maintenance Warrant Article
- \$1,068,500 in construction funds for Pollard locker room retrofits
- \$817,750 in planning and design funds for Roof Top Unit (RTU) replacement at Broadmeadow and Eliot Schools

Looking Forward

The 2021-2022 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 2022-2023 school year. We respectfully ask for Town Meeting's support of our operating and capital budgets, as proposed.

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

Sincerely,



Connie Barr
Chair, Needham School Committee ('25)