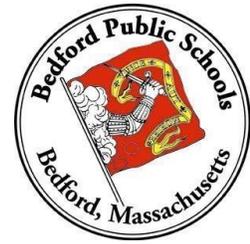


BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



To: Members of the Bedford School Committee
From: Cliff Chuang, Superintendent
Julie Kirrane, Director of Finance
Date: October 20, 2023
Subject: FY25 Budget Process Overview

This memo outlines the start of the FY25 budget development process for the school year 2024-2025 (fiscal 2025). The administrators in the district have already begun looking at and discussing our needs for next year. At your October 24, 2023, meeting, we are sharing with the School Committee a general overview of the budget process. This memo includes a general overview of the principles that inform the budget process, the budget calendar, current enrollment figures, and the student needs we hope to address.

At this point, there are many variables that could impact our FY25 budget, as it is still early in the year. The district leadership team will be closely reviewing budgets over the next two months and working cooperatively with program administrators/directors, and other school leaders to determine our needs. We will work with you, the Finance Committee, the Town Manager, and other town officials to provide the information that you need. To the best of our ability, we will work to stay within the budgetary guidelines that the Finance Committee has set. That said, we are committed to ensuring that the budget addresses the essential needs of the district, our contractual obligations, and ongoing district priorities. It is our hope that the FY25 budget will shore up critical teaching and learning resources, and also will ensure the district is strategically poised for even more successes in our core mission for equity and excellence in teaching and learning, to be further advanced in the district's next three-year district improvement plan.

Special Educational Stabilization Fund

During this budget process, we will work to balance the needs of all of our students, continue to offer the highest quality programming that is sustainable, and be fiscally responsible.. As part of this process, we have had preliminary discussions with our new Town Manager and the Finance Committee chair about proposing a Special Education Stabilization Fund. This is a relatively new tool (part of the Municipal Modernization Act of 2016) that some of our neighboring towns have implemented. We expect to be recommending this for Bedford, and will share more information about how Bedford might establish, fund and utilize a stabilization fund for the benefit of some of our most vulnerable learners. A description of the Special Education Stabilization Fund is attached for reference. We believe that this would be a prudent and effective measure that would support Bedford's efforts to manage the growth of the school operating budget while supporting teachers and teaching assistants who deliver IEP services and interventions to help students access grade level curriculum, specialized transportation services when required and other educational programming required by students with significant disabilities.

Enrollment Context

The district planned for lower enrollments at the elementary schools this year, due to accumulated changes in enrollment over the past few years since 2020-21. The deployment by the state in August of the Bedford Plaza Hotel as an emergency migrant shelter, and the current state of emergency has resulted in 50 additional students at all four schools, with most students in the younger grades. Overall district-wide enrollment was 46 students over the projection made in the fall of 2023. Please see the preliminary enrollment levels by grade and school in the attached enrollment tables, and the variation from projected enrollment in the current school year.

The district was able to absorb the additional enrollment and has added three teachers specializing in English learning and early childhood instruction for newcomers, among other resources. We are pleased that the state has provided the financial support necessary for Bedford to meet the needs of these students. However the Massachusetts state of emergency related to migrant families has required significant effort from our educators and administrators who, again, are rising to another challenge on behalf of their students.

The community, teachers, staff and school administration, and the school committee continue to share a deep commitment to established class size guidelines. Therefore, the district is committed to careful planning for student move-ins to Bedford in the 2024-25 school year. At this time last year, we had shared preliminary enrollment projections with the School Committee, but we are still engaged in the analysis this year, due to the additional complexity in planning. At the same time, we acknowledge that we expect to continue to see reductions in elementary grades next school year. We also expect to see some enrollment growth at the secondary level, in a similar pattern as was projected last year.

Once the October 1 official enrollment numbers are confirmed by the end of this month, enrollment projections will be finalized. The district uses internal projections based on standard projection methodology to predict future grade cohorts based on past averages. The district also contracts with NESDEC to produce an independent projection which should be available by the end of November.

Budget Timeline

As the FY25 budget development process gets underway in earnest, some benchmarks will include providing high-level overviews to the staff, the School Committee, and the Finance Committee in November. This will lead to the creation and presentation of the Superintendent's Budget by mid-December, accompanied by a comprehensive budget proposal and line item budget detail. These documents are in turn reviewed, discussed and voted on by the school committee by the end of January. By early February, the approved School Committee Budget is presented at the Finance Committee for review and approval and finally is voted on at the town meeting in March. Please see the budget calendar (attached) for an overview of the full process.

Please don't hesitate to contact either one of us with any questions.

BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS FY25 BUDGET CALENDAR

Tuesday, 10/17/2023	Budget Discussion at Leadership Team: Budget Needs, Efficiencies and Priorities
Wednesday, 10/18/2023	Budget Memo to full administrative team Budget Submission Instructions to Principals, Directors, PAs and PDs
Remainder of October 2023	Superintendent's small group meetings with each school, level, and program area
Tuesday, 10/24/23 7:00 p.m.	Budget Introduction at School Committee - Priority Needs, Preliminary Enrollment Projection, Calendar
Following 10/24/2023 School Committee Meeting	Budget Introduction Memo to All Staff
Tuesday, 11/14/2023	Budget Discussion at Leadership Team
Tuesday, 11/14/2023 7:00 p.m.	High-Level Budget Needs at School Committee
Friday 11/17/2023	Budget Submission from Principals, Directors, PAs and PDs Due
Thursday, 11/30/2023 7:00 p.m.	High-Level Budget Needs at Finance Committee
Tuesday, 11/21/2023	Budget Discussion at Leadership
Tuesday, 11/28/2023	Budget Discussion at Leadership
Tuesday, 12/12/2023	Superintendent's Budget Presentation to All Staff
Tuesday, 12/12/2023	Superintendent's Budget Presentation to School Committee
Tuesday, 1/9/2024	School Committee Budget Review and Discussion
Tuesday, 1/16/2024	School Committee Budget Review and Discussion
Tuesday, 1/23/2024 Hearing 7:00 p.m.	School Committee Budget Hearing and Vote
Thursday, 1/25/2024 7:00 p.m.	School Budget Presentation at Finance Committee
Thursday, 2/1/2024 7:00 p.m. (as needed)	School Budget Discussion and vote at Finance Committee

Advisory on Special Education Stabilization Fund

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/circuitbreaker/stabilization.html>

Section 24 of Chapter 218 of the Acts of 2016 provides for the establishment of a Special Education Stabilization fund. The law enables municipal and regional districts to establish a reserve fund that can be used in future years for unanticipated or unbudgeted costs of special education, out of district tuition, transportation and recovery high school tuition.

Establishing, Funding and Making Payments from the Stabilization Fund

In order to establish the fund the law requires a majority vote by both the School Committee and local legislative body. In the case of regional school districts the local legislative body means a majority vote of the legislative bodies in a majority of the member communities of the district. Once the fund is established, the school committee may include a separate line item in their annual budget request to appropriate monies into the stabilization fund. For regions, the amount to be appropriated to the stabilization fund is included in each member municipality's assessment. The balance in the reserve fund cannot exceed two percent of the annual net school spending of the school district.

Funds in the reserve fund can only be expended or transferred out after a majority vote of both the School Committee and Selectmen or City Council or in the case of regional school districts, a majority vote of the boards of selectmen or city councils of a majority of the member communities of the district.

Other areas districts may choose to consider when establishing the fund are:

- Maximum balance in the fund
- A limit on the amount that can be expended in a fiscal year

BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS – 2023-24 PRELIMINARY ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL

School	Actual	Projected	Actual (Preliminary)	Projection Variance
	FY23 (2022-23)	FY24 (2023-24)	FY24 (2023-24)	FY24 (2023-24)
Preschool at Davis	44	44	44	0
Davis	470	453	477	24
Lane	587	560	569	9
TOTAL ELEMENTARY	1,057	1,013	1,046	33
John Glenn Middle School	597	609	612	3
Bedford High School	841	858	868	10
TOTAL SECONDARY	1,438	1,468	1,480	12
TOTAL K-12	2,495	2,481	2,526	45
TOTAL PREK-12	2,539	2,525	2,570	45
Out-of-District Students	38	44	44	0
TOTAL ALL STUDENTS	2,577	2,569	2,614	45

BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS – 2023-24 PRELIMINARY ENROLLMENT BY GRADE

Grade	Actual	Projected	Oct 1 (Preliminary)	Projection Variance
	FY23	FY24	FY24	FY24
PK	44	44	44	0
K	141	149	161	12
1	145	151	160	9
2	184	153	156	3
3	179	185	192	7
4	190	181	181	0
5	218	194	196	2
6	188	217	221	4
7	202	189	189	0
8	207	203	202	-1
9	221	234	230	-4
10	226	217	214	-3
11	194	219	227	8
12	200	188	197	9
TOTAL	2,539	2,525	2,570	45
% change	-2.40%		1.77%	