

Collection of Questions and Answers related to the FY 25 Superintendent's budget.

Q: I was looking over some of the materials about the new school budget. I got to a table that showed the projected increase for each town in the district and it shows a 10+% increase for Bowdoin. That is higher than the increases for the other towns in the district. I'm looking for some insight into why our increase is more than the other towns and wondered if [you] could shed some light on this.

A: The calculation that determines the financial responsibilities of each town is the same one that has been used by the District, I believe, since it was organized. The amount that each town is responsible for is 50% based on the number of students in each town and 50% based on the property valuation as determined by the State. Bowdoin has a larger percentage increase than the other towns this year due to a larger increase in the State's property valuation. Brandy's recollection was correct. In the Superintendent's proposed budget, Bowdoin's share will increase from \$3,603,242 in FY 24 to \$3,793,160 in FY 25. An increase of \$189,918 or 5.27%. The other towns' percentage increases are: Bowdoinham 2.73%, Harpswell, 2.62% and Topsham 2.27%.

The valuations for each town are an average of the 2021, 2022, and 2023 town valuations, UNLESS 2023 is lower than the average. Then they would use 2023. In all four of our towns this year they used the average.

Q: After reflecting on last night's presentation, I would like to know why the policy on teacher/student ratio was never discussed even though it was said to be an important piece of this budget season?

For the past several years, the Board has asked for this policy to be reviewed and that perhaps we need to adjust our numbers.

A: The class size policy was reviewed and applied extensively by the Superintendent and the Administrators during the creation of her budget, and their diligent application of the policy is what led Heidi to make the recommendations for reduction in force reflected in the budget. She will be able to provide more specific information on each of the positions that she has proposed to eliminate shortly (after all potentially impacted individuals have been notified) so that we can discuss them line by line at the March 25 (and April 1) Deliberations.

At this time, she does not think that IHB-R needs to be elevated in the policy review rotation.

Q: In Exhibit 11, item #22, RTI-A position at WCS, has the Superintendent note. “Not an ask as already in the budget.” Please provide more information.

A: The position was in the 23-24 budget and supported by ESSER funds. The proposal is to fund the position 25% with Title II and 75% with Special Ed funding.

Q: In Exhibit 11, item #25, Increase 10 paras from 30 to 35 hours, has the Superintendent note “NET Reduction” and it is changed from 10 paras to 3. I understand the decision is to support the change from 30 to 35 hours for 3 out of the 10 paras for this year, can you explain the “NET Reduction” note?

A: We propose to phase in the increase of hours for paras starting with 3 next year. Increasing the hours for three paras is more efficient than the current schedule and results in no net gain in the line item.

Q: In Exhibit 11, item #26, Add one Pre-K teacher at BCS, the Superintendent note changes the cost from \$85,000 to \$0. Please provide more information.

A: The Pre-K at BCS is currently being offered through a contract with Head-Start. The proposal is to add a Pre-K teacher to the MSAD 75 school staff and end the contract with Head-Start. The cost is estimated to be about the same and will allow us to serve more students with a curriculum that we design.

Q: In Exhibit 11, Non-Personnel line 8 Electric bus is not listed in the Superintendent notes. Was that an oversight and do you have a recommendation?

A: Yes, it was inadvertently left off the Superintendent notes. I do not recommend that the District go forward with the electric bus this year.

Q: Is the clinical reading instructor that is in the proposed budget different from the current RT-I position?

A: This RTI position was funded by ESSER funds. The proposed position is funded 25% from Title II and 75% from Special Ed.

Q: What is the \$80,000 security access system upgrade?

A: Last year a security audit was conducted on all of the MSAD 75 buildings. Several options were proposed to enhance the security of our buildings and achieve a similar level of security for all buildings. This money is proposed to begin to address those needs and to allow us to be eligible for matching grants. The funds will be used to purchase items such as key-card readers, alarms, cameras, and speaker systems.

Q: What is the \$20,000 Orion funding for?

A: When it was built it was estimated that the Orion could support its operations by charging outside groups fees for use while providing access to MSAD 75 schools for no fee. MSAD 75 provides all utilities and general maintenance at no cost to the Orion. It was assumed that the use would be approximately 50% outside groups. Over the years it has actually been more heavily used by MSAD 75 groups than outside groups.

During COVID use by outside groups was curtailed and therefore funding was not available for maintenance. The Orion was able to support itself with its fund balance. Restrictions have been lifted and outside groups are once again using the space. The Orion committee is reassessing its fee structure, but it is also in need of more funds to upgrade much of its equipment (lighting and sound system). The proposal is to create a new line item in the MSAD 75 budget to provide financial support to the Orion in an amount that approximate the hourly pay for its director.

Q: A request for more information about the Strategic Planning proposal.

A: Please see the Superintendents community note regarding the proposed plan.

Q: Where is DEI in this budget?

A: There is no specific line-item. There is funding for Professional Development that may be used for DEI.

Q: Why is there a gap between what the State says are the Essential Programs and the actual budget.

A: State funding is determined by a formula based on the number of students in the district, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district, and

special education data. The same formula is applied to all districts and is out of date.

Q: How does the reserve for the teacher position work?

A: The money is set aside in the fund balance to be used if a position is needed. If the position is not needed the money can be returned to the unexpended fund balance.

Q: Are there concerns about spending fund balance and creating a fiscal “cliff” in the following year?

A: We must balance that concern with the possibility that the state will reduce the percentage that we are allowed to carry in the next fiscal year. On balance, the proposed \$2.5 million is responsible.

Q: Has there been an audit of the Special Ed reimbursements?

A: We will research this question.

Q: Does the Superintendent’s budget have any proposed increase to the athletic fund (for items such as replacement of the turf field)?

A: It does not.

Requests/Comments heard at the Community Forums

- Consider funding playground equipment.
- Would rather pay teachers than pay for a strategic plan.
- Don’t understand the need for an outside consultant and the proposed funding for a strategic plan.
- Reconsider/increase the rates we charge for all MSAD 75 facilities including the rates for Family Focus.
- Plan to invite our local state delegation to the conversation with the Town Managers to educate them about issues with state/school funding.

