

Answers to Appropriation Committee's Questions

1. If the district had to level fund its FY19 budget, where would you propose making cuts? What criteria would you apply to determine appropriate cuts?

If the district had to level fund its FY19 operating budget at the FY18 level the budget would not be able to cover the increased costs associated with a level services budget. This would mean we could not preserve all current academic, athletic and extracurricular programs and the administration and School Committee will be required to identify \$1,670,355 of reductions for next year.

The criteria the administration would use would start with a comprehensive process to identify possible reductions. The Administration would evaluate all components of the pre-K to 12 educational program, looking carefully at the impact of any potential cuts on programs and schools. Requirements to meet State and Federal mandates, the Rhode Island Basic Education Program (BEP), and graduation requirements as defined by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) will be prioritized and the last to be cut.

The process would also include a review of class sizes in core subject areas with the Barrington High School administrative team to see where reductions could be made. The Athletic Director would be asked to provide information regarding the District's athletic offerings, including student participation in different programs and the cost per student by program to evaluate and perform a cost-benefit analysis of those offerings. Most potential cuts would have a direct impact on student learning; such as impacting student/teacher ratios and elimination of programs and course electives.

2. On a related note, what items/services did the district opt to forgo this year (aside from personnel increases) to arrive at the proposed budget?

Some of the requests for items and services that did not make it into the final request of the School Committee included some significant priorities for the district. They included funding to increase the school resources officer (SRO) from a part-time to full-time position (which was subsequently requested through the municipal budget). A part-time social/emotional support position for the elementary school level and a part-time math interventionist at the Middle School were also not requested this year. We also deferred funding an Instruction coach for K-3 teachers and almost all of the furniture requests from our schools.

3. If the district needs to make late hires (i.e. in August), what line item funds such positions?

When August hires (or any other expenses that are not anticipated in our budget request) need to be made we have limited options that can be identified as funding sources. Some items that are not known at the time the budget is submitted are reviewed to determine if there is any flexibility within those accounts. The health insurance renewal is an example of this. Many other expense accounts for such items as books and supplies are already committed by August in anticipation of the new school year. To any extent those funds are not already committed we might have to freeze spending in those accounts until we possibly identify favorability in another account or accounts later in the school year to fund the unanticipated

expense. Finally, our fund balance policy allows us to expend our (1%) unrestricted operating fund balance on certain one-time emergency expenses if the expense(s) meet the requirements defined the policy.

4. Can you please explain the 13.2% increase in Executive (2100)?

The increase in Executive (2100) is to budget for the Systems of Support position that was created in FY18. The funding for this position is split between the operating budging and a Federal grant.

5. When do you anticipate budgeting for changes in school start times?

We are currently performing an efficiency study of our transportation services. Our expectation is that many of the district's initiatives that are impacted by transportation will be reviewed as part of this study. All new initiatives including start times will be reviewed within the context of the strategic plan.

6. What's the pedagogical justification for technology at the lower grades (e.g. chrome books)? How does the district's technology spend compare with comparable districts?

The justification at the lower grades (K-3) is based on a 3:1 ratio and use of Apple/tablet products as they are easier to navigate at that age level rather than QWERTY keyboard products. Students at the K-5 levels need electronic devises to access their on-line curriculum. The devices are also used for, but not limited to literacy and numeracy screening, state assessment testing and progress monitoring and intervention.

Our technology per-pupil expenditure is below average per the latest UCOA (state education financial reporting) figures.

7. Each year, the practice of zero-based budgeting is touted. Can you explain the benefits/costs of this approach to annual budgeting and whether other approaches have been considered/tried?

Zero-based budgeting (ZBB) is a method of budgeting in which all expenses must be justified for each new period. The process of zero-based budgeting starts from a "zero base," and every function within an organization is analyzed for its needs and costs. Budgets are then built around what is needed for the upcoming period, regardless of whether each budget is higher or lower than the previous one.

The primary alternative to zero based budgeting is Traditional budgeting which calls for incremental increases over previous budgets, such as a 4% increase in spending, as opposed to a justification of both old and new expenses. We feel that the process of Zero-based budgeting provides the BPS the opportunity to review each proposed expense on an annual basis and provide maximum value for its citizens.

8. How is the 2012-2107 BPS Strategic Plan relevant to next year's budget?

The budget contains the tenets of the 2012-2017 BPS Strategic Plan as it was used to plan and focus our objectives during the budget process. We will incorporate the successor strategic plan into future budgeting processes upon adoption. The new strategic plan is currently being finalized.

- 9. On the sheets marked "Budget Highlights/Variances from FY18 Budget," what is the column to the left of the FY18 Approved Budget column? In this unmarked column, why might there be differences between what is listed there and what is listed in the column marked Difference?**

The unmarked column represents the variance of the specific expense referenced to the left of the column. The amount in the difference column represents the variance in the entire category (51000 series, for example). We identified the significant variances in each series on this summary to highlight them.

- 10. For the Executive Summary Page 3, it would be helpful to have a longer history on increases in salary/benefits and what the % increases were each year. It appears that there was a steady 2% increase each year from 2013 - 2018 and the proposed budget increases by 3.3%...it would be helpful to have this information in larger context/history.**

Please see supplementary schedule that provides this information.

- 11. Please explain the difference between certified and non-certified staff in terms of health insurance choice.**

Certified and non-certified staff currently have the same health insurance benefit offered to them. The only difference is some long-term non-certified employees have been grandfathered into paying a lower premium co-share.

- 12. How much is the strategic planning consultant costing in total, over how many years?**

The strategic planning consultant is contracted for a facilitation phase for \$22,400 (including a 12% administration fee) followed by a partnership contract for 2½ years for \$31,360/year (including a 12% administration fee). The total is \$100,800 over 3½ years.

- 13. For the Capital Budget Request, what percentage of existing Chromebooks are being replaced? Will there be any attempts to recycle devices?**

Chrome books purchased in any given year of the 1:1 initiative represent approximately 30% of the High School and Middle School total. Those Chrome books that still have useful after their term in the High School and Middle School are then cycled to the elementary level.

- 14. I believe that it was indicated that the Highlander FUSE Architect grant was \$75,000, not \$7,500 (as listed)...true?**

Correct (\$75,000, over three years). There was a glitch in converting this information from a previous form. We apologize for the error. Thank you for bringing to our attention.