

Beginning Suggestions for the BPS Budget 2019-2020 (Feb. 2019)

By Lisa Jeanne Graf (a BPS parent)

The goal is avoid school budget cuts, and to also have enough money to fund critical investments.

- So far about **\$1,614,000** in money has been found from the current budget that could be used more strategically.
- Also it might be possible to add about **\$12,000,000** to the BPS budget from city snow removal funds (this is a guess and about half of this winter's budget).

In the process of trying to more fully fund school budgets **some ideas of how to use the current BPS funds differently** are listed below.

1. For testing into the exam schools have BPS use a test that is already being used by students like the MCAS test or another method to evaluate how well students have learned the BPS curriculum. If the ISSE is not used, then the district would **save \$364,000** for not needing to have exam fees, proctors, and family outreach. There might still be some costs for offering testing to non-BPS students. Question: would those expenses be?
2. Have the **\$500,00** dollars planned to bolster family engagement go directly to schools with budget cuts. Family engagement is easier when schools are fully funded.
3. To reach the goal of funding more school counselors BPS could hire less school police officers. Question: what are the salaries of Police officers, and counselors?
4. Money that the budget office calls "**reserves**" should be put into school budgets from the beginning so that school communities do not needlessly stress about budget cuts.
5. Update the weights for students funding. Currently the weights have not been updated from last year and this is part of why the school budgets are being underfunded.
6. Less money could be spent on Central Office and specifically not spending "**\$750,000** to facilitate improved outcomes for schools identified as needing support." A thanks to Annissa Essaibi-George and Jon Shore for advocating for moving some funding from Central Office to directly serve student needs.

7. Reduce the budget for mailing stamps for communications that do not go out to families.

Possible funding sources from the **Boston City Budget:**

1. Set aside a percentage of new taxes on Marijuana for schools
2. It appears that the budget for snow removal for 2019 is \$24,067,875. It has been a mild winter so some of that money might be available for BPS. Any money left over could be set aside for BPS. Currently if there is money left over at the end of the winter that money rolls over into the next year's budget.
3. If the city council has elections for 4 year terms moving forward, instead of 2 year terms, the money saved on election expenses could be earmarked for Boston Public Schools.
4. Money available from the Boston building boom
5. Wealthy tax-exempt organizations could pay their full PILOT amounts or have less services and not have any requested building permits approved
6. To encourage a company to move to Boston, we could stop the process of offering tax breaks. Instead a further investment could be made to BPS & that information could be shared. That would be a win-win investment.

Possible funding sources from the **State Budget:**

1. Money that GE will be returning to the state could be allocated for education funding.

Additional funding sources for Build BPS:

1. New Market Tax credits
2. Have some non-profit buildings be used for BPS schools, or swing space as part of community benefits
3. Some capital money could go to BPS from the \$153 million sale of the Winthrop Square garage.
4. Solar panels could be installed over school parking lots to generate electricity for school buildings and also to sell to the grid. Also additional city owned land or parking lots could install solar panels as well and sell electricity. The money earned could go into BPS budgets as well.

Areas to increase investment:

1. Use the Henderson model for inclusion - two teachers and a para professional
2. Swing space for Build BPS so no school communities will be broken up.
3. A foundation budget for all schools that will pay for at minimum, critical staff including nurses, librarians, psychologists, art teachers, music teachers and social workers.
4. Additional bus monitors
5. Live streaming for all BPS meetings (not just school committee meetings)

I am hoping that I can collect more ideas to add to this beginning list. My email is lisa_jeanne_graf@msn.com

References:

Ideas on reforming how BPS creates school budgets;
http://ljgraf.com/BPS/BPS_Budget_Priorities.pdf

Education Funding Ideas:
http://ljgraf.com/BPS/Education_Funding_Ideas.pdf

History of Weighted Student Funding at BPS (thanks to Kristin Johnson)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15KFPg18a1biIPC1MIb-x2HWjn-SKy5RD/view>

Articles:

Globe Article on the proposed BPS school budget:
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/02/06/proposed-school-budget-would-overhaul-science-instruction/F5Z5sSNCwNfrtREipuy5zH/story.html?event=event25?event=event25>

Opinion Globe Article by Annissa Essaibi-George:
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2019/02/14/the-long-road-ahead-for-boston-schools/kEic5d68gUeOgyIfuJSNxN/story.html#comments>

Commentary by Neema Avashia
<https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2019/02/15/boston-vaedictorians-neema-avashia>

Opinion Bay State Banner Article by Yawu Miller:

<https://www.baystatebanner.com/2019/02/07/valedictorian-report-highlights-disparities/>