

Suggestions for the BPS Budget 2019-2020 (March 30, 2019)

By Lisa Jeanne Graf (a BPS parent)

The goal is for all schools to have a foundation staff and then extra money would be added from weighted student funding. School budgets would be fully funded first and then the rest of the BPS budget would be budgeted. Equity in school budgets would be in place in the first budget.

In the process of working to reach these goals **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 **\$500,000** dollars planned to bolster family engagement be used thoughtfully. **\$172,000** of these funds goes towards Enrollment & Recruitment (including welcome centers) and this might be a good investment if it increases BPS enrollment. Family engagement needs to not just be about listening, but actually using feedback to make policy decisions. Using some of this money to live stream all BPS meetings (and not just school committee meetings) would make it easier for more families to be informed and to contribute.
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? Also Sel Wel staff could be reduced, or some of those staff could have positions at a school as school counselors instead. For students with behavioral challenges who have ABA services, counseling services could be offered instead.
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. The money set aside for reserves is currently **\$804,435**.
5. Update the weights for students funding. Currently the weights have not been updated from last year. If the weights do not get updated then this is a cut, because of inflation.

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. The cost for ABA in the district is \$9,736,239. The district could consider other approaches for autistic students including classrooms that are more comfortable from a sensory standpoint, including lights that are not florescent. ABA is not a practice that autistic adults support, including adults that had ABA as children. Some of the concerns are how ABA can hurt emotional health and self esteem - ABA is often used to stop stims (which are a natural and effective way to self regulate) and to force eye contact (which can give sensory discomfort and overload). It is ethical to come up with other approaches like Floortime Therapy, OT, social skills education, alternative communication approaches, etc..
8. Reduce the budget for mailing stamps for communications that do not go out to families. Also with more communications becoming digital there could be a plan to see if this budget could be reduced by switching to digital communications were possible. The current cost is \$306,965.00.
9. Extended Learning Time could be removed. That would save the district \$___ (need to research this amount). This would also allow the district to implement a school start time plan that would save the distict money, and also provide times that families would prefer.
http://ligrاف.com/BPS/pragmatic_proposals.pdf
This approach would save a LOT of money and should seriously be considered.
10. If some BPS partners are non profits there could discussions on how some of the community benefits could include contributing to after and before school services.

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 and have some of their community benefits include contributing to the Boston Public Schools.
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 list. My email is lisa_jeanne_graf@msn.com

References:

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

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

History of Weighted Student Funding at BPS (thanks to Kristin Johnson):
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15KFPg18a1biPC1MIb-x2HWjn-SKy5RD/view>

BPS Budget Information:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Oz3oCQW0nOcSgnOG1iusZxLDaTuKjTye/view?hootPostID=91fd781b846b850467e03fee2d99b67f>

Email: budget@bostonpublicschools.org

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/kEic5d68gUeOgylfuJSNxN/story.html#comments>

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

Opinion Bay State Banner Article by Yawu Miller:
<https://www.baystatebanner.com/2019/02/07/valedictorian-report-highlights-disparities/>