



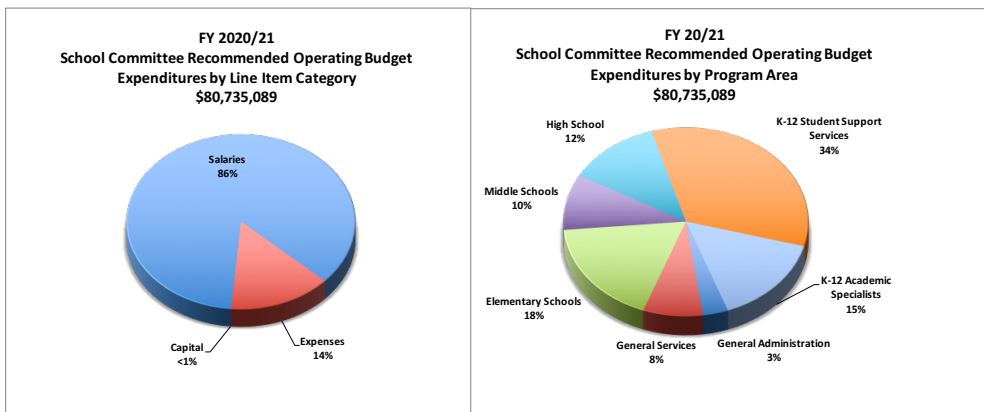
# NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1330 HIGHLAND AVENUE  
NEEDHAM, MA 02492

May 1, 2020

Dear Town Meeting Members:

The Needham School Committee invites you to consider its operating budget request for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 (FY 2020/21). The proposed budget, which totals **\$80,735,089**, represents a **\$4,729,324 (6.2%)** increase over the current year operating budget of **\$76,005,765**.



This request provides the resources required to address existing staff contractual obligations, enrollment growth, special education needs, and the District’s Portrait of a Needham Graduate Five-Year Strategic Plan.

The two key components of the budget plan include **Level Service Requests** and **Program Improvement Requests**.

## Level Service Requests

Level service requests represent the resources required to bring existing and necessary programs, contracts, and staffing levels into the new fiscal year. In order to maintain class sizes at acceptable levels, additional classroom, administrative, and special education resources are required and included as part of level service.

- **Contractual Salary Increases.** Negotiated contracts for all existing employees account for \$2.8 million, about 60% of the total requested increase. In order to recruit, support, and retain a talented faculty and staff, we must provide reasonable yet competitive salaries for our staff, teachers, and school leaders.

## 2020/21 Budget Calendar

Sept 2019 – School Committee Developed School Budget Priorities & Guidelines

Oct/ Nov – Superintendent Developed Preliminary Budget Recommendation, Based on School Committee Guidelines

Dec 10 – Superintendent’s Budget Request Sent to School Committee, Town Manager and the Finance Committee

Dec/Jan – School Committee Holds Public Hearing(s) and Reviews the Superintendent’s Request in Concert with the Finance Committee

January 2020 – School Committee Sends Formal Budget Request to the Town Manager (Due on or Before Jan 31.)

January – Town Manager Presents Balanced Town-Wide Budget Proposal, Including the Voted Request of the School Committee, to the Finance Committee for Formal Deliberation

Jan/Feb/Mar – Finance Committee Reviews Budget Requests and Holds Public Hearings

March – Finance Committee Votes its Final Budget Recommendation to Town Meeting. The Finance Committee’s Recommendation is Considered the Main Motion to be Acted Upon by Town Meeting

June 8, 2020 – Annual Town Meeting

July 1, 2020 – New Fiscal Year Begins

- **Enrollment, Class Size, Program support.** Overall enrollment is projected to increase by 64 pupils in FY21, with 75% of this increase occurring at the elementary level and 25% occurring at the secondary school level. A total of 2.0 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) classroom and specialist teachers are proposed for Pollard, and 1.5 classroom FTE are proposed for the High School. A total of 0.77 FTE for elementary classroom teaching and math intervention support also are included. Assistant principal positions at High Rock, Mitchell, Sunita L. Williams, and Eliot are proposed to increase by a total of 0.8 FTE.
- **Special Education and Student Support Service Costs.** Increases in the number of special education students being served, special education tuition, and other mandated service costs amount to \$1.3 million of the new funds requested, and include 8.0 FTE new special education, counseling, and English Language Learner (ELL) teachers and 2.09 FTE teacher assistants and administrative support. The need to provide additional resources for professional services, which includes consultation, testing, counseling, and home services, is significantly increased and rising tuition costs for students requiring services outside of the district are also reflected in this budget plan. The most significant component of the plan, however, is to address inequities in the number of students served within our schools and adjust and balance the caseloads of special educators to ensure they are able to meet student needs and build program capacity within each school.

### **Program Improvement Requests**

- Program Improvement requests are meant to create, enhance, improve, or expand programs to serve student and school needs. Due to the necessity of funding Level Service needs, it was not feasible to include much of the over \$790,000 in program improvement initiatives sought by principals and program leaders. However, funds totaling \$50,618 for high school textbooks, technology infrastructure and an expansion of the Unified Sports are proposed as part of this budget plan.

### **Significant Assumptions Incorporated into the FY 2020/21 Budget:**

- The budget assumes that total PreK-12 enrollment (excluding students attending out-of-District placements) will be 5,771 in FY 2020/21, up 64 students from the FY 2019/20 enrollment of 5,707. Elementary enrollment is projected to increase by 48 students (from 2,586 to 2,634); middle school enrollment is expected to decrease by 6 students (from 1,391 to 1,385) and high school enrollment is expected to increase by 22 students (from 1,658 to 1,680.) The elementary enrollment growth is projected to occur primarily in the Eliot, Williams and Newman districts. Although overall middle school enrollment is projected to decline by 6 pupils, this change reflects the net effect of the large sixth grade class moving from High Rock to Pollard. (As such, High Rock enrollment is projected to decline by 69 students, while Pollard is projected to grow by 63 students.) The High School enrollment projection begins the march of high school students toward a peak Grade 9-12 enrollment of 1,860 in 2027/28. Pre-Kindergarten enrollment is expected to remain constant at 72 students. An estimated 97 students are expected to be placed out-of-district.
- A modest cost of living adjustment is provided for school staff, including teachers, administrators, instructional assistants and clerical workers. As of budget preparation time, all of these contracts were under negotiation for the FY 2020/21 school year.

- Level funding is proposed for non-salary accounts. All budget increases beyond level funding are highlighted in the next section.

### **Budget Development Process & Priorities:**

The FY 2020/21 budget development process began earlier in the school year, when the School Committee identified budget priorities to guide the administration in the budget planning process. These included:

- The District's Portrait of a Needham Graduate Strategic Priorities.
- The need for highly qualified staff, teaching within established student/teacher ratio guidelines.
- The ongoing refinement of curriculum, instruction and assessment practices; and
- The need to develop and maintain educational resources and a technology infrastructure that supports student learning and meets District goals.

Administrators developed budget requests in the Fall and submitted them for consideration and discussion in November. The Central Office Administration then met with principals and program directors to review and discuss budget requests in light of the School Committee's identified priorities and district goals. Finally, the Superintendent consulted with the Town Manager and the School Committee and Finance Committee budget liaisons to understand Town and School needs as they relate to the overall budget planning process.

### **What are the Capital Project Priorities for FY 2020/21?**

The School Committee has identified the following technology and equipment replacement needs for FY 2020/21, which are recommended for funding as follows from the Capital Improvement Budget:

The FY21 capital budget request totals \$1,991,143 and includes \$788,743 in technology and equipment replacement requests, and \$1,202,400 in facility-related requests. The facility requests include: \$392,400 to create new classrooms at the Broadmeadow and Eliot Schools, \$650,000 in feasibility study funds to implement the priority project recommended by the ongoing School Master Plan study, and \$160,000 in other funds to study recommend improvements to the school auditorium spaces and the potential use of the Hillside School as swing space for future school projects.

The Town Manager has recommended partial (Tier 1) funding of \$913,223 for school projects including:

- \$556,575 for school technology;
- \$35,000 for school furniture;
- \$37,600 for copier replacement;
- \$104,748 for school vehicle replacement; and
- \$179,300 for the Eliot School technology room conversion.

Finally, the School Department continues to work with the Permanent Public Building Committee to complete a School Master Plan of school facility needs and to study options for renovating/replacing the Emery Grover School Administration Building.

## **Closing Remarks:**

This budget message – and the budget itself – was prepared before the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our system and our staff are resilient and are responding to this challenge. We are working creatively and collaboratively to use the resources we have to address this novel situation. We know that this coming year will demand similar flexibility. We believe that the thoughtful planning and solid foundation that this proposed budget is built on will enable us to succeed.

The School Committee thanks the Superintendent and our outstanding staff, who have, as always, worked so hard to prepare this budget. The School Committee also values our ongoing collaboration with members of the Select Board, the Finance Committee and the Town Manager and her staff in our collective effort to craft a sustainable Town-wide budget that meets the needs of all citizens. We greatly appreciate the continued support of all of the town committees, boards and citizens, and we respectfully ask for your support at Town Meeting.

We also wish to recognize the achievement of our talented staff and students, who are working collectively to implement the District's Portrait of Needham Graduate vision. This document provides more information about key components of that vision and depicts the efforts of staff and students to make this vision a reality. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael J. Greis".

Michael Greis ('20)  
Chair, Needham School Committee 2019-20