



CITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

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Office of the Mayor | Henrietta Davis

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July 24, 2013

To: Cambridge City Clerk

From: Mayor Henrietta Davis

Please place the attached letter received from Jeffrey Young, Superintendent of Schools on the Communications and Reports from City Officers.

Thank you.



CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



JEFFREY M. YOUNG, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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TO: Mayor Henrietta Davis
Donna Lopez, City Clerk

FROM: Jeffrey M. Young
Superintendent of Schools

DATE: July 2, 2013

SUBJ: Responses to City Council Budget Questions

Prior to the City Council/School Committee Roundtable Meeting on June 10, 2013, City Councilors posed a number of questions and requested answers in writing. Below please find our responses to these questions.

Question 1: Has the School Department done any projections to see if the upper school populations will be sufficient in the years 2016, 2017, 2018, etc?

Answer: On page 20 of the budget book we display enrollment projections for the next five years. There you will see that currently in grades 6-8, we enroll 1,066 students. The projections for the out years are as follows:

2013/14 = 1,111
2014/15 = 1,218
2015/16 = 1,223
2016/17 = 1,213
2017/18 = 1,280

Question 2: In what ways does the Innovation Agenda (IA) address academic achievement, and can you explain how academic achievement will be measured? In what ways does the Innovation Agenda work to close the Achievement Gap?

Answer: The IA seeks to close achievement gaps in the single most important way--by eliminating the opportunity gaps that have existed in Cambridge for decades. In the current school year, for the first time, ALL students in grades 6-8 have had access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum that will prepare them for CRLS and beyond, regardless of which school they attend prior to high school. This academic program will be refined in the coming year to ensure the consistent application of high expectations for every student in our middle grades. The System-wide Goals document we left with you at the City Council meeting details the measures we will use to determine our success in meeting our goals.

Question 3: On Page 4 of the School Department budget, the document speaks to after-school clubs; is this a part of the DHSP budget and just noted in the CPSD budget, or is this a CPSD expense? And how does this impact DHSP after-school and community School programs?

Answer: The after-school clubs referenced on page 4 are those that are developed by the teachers and Head of School at each of the campuses. CPS teachers are paid a small stipend to run these clubs, and the money for those stipends is included in the CPS budget. They are not the same program as the DHSP offerings, nor are they connected to our other out-of-school time providers. They are strictly in-school, based on the expressed interests of our students. Our regular school teachers deliver these programs for varying periods of time, and the clubs are not designed to replace a more traditional after-school program that we have seen in Cambridge. We do not believe that these clubs supplant DHSP programs in any way; they are simply a way for teachers and students to connect in areas of mutual interest.

Question 4: On Page 6: How is the Scholar College preschool program being funded, and how is that different from the Home Base programs (Homebase and the Family Centers work)?

Answer: Scholar College is the name given to pre-school component of the Wraparound Zone at Fletcher Maynard Academy. It is part of the CPS budget (see page 31 of the budget book for more detail). It is unrelated to the Home Base Program (which is described on page 132 of the budget book).

Question 5: On Page 6: What happened to K-5 foreign language?

Answer: The decision to hold off on introducing World Language in K-5 has as much, if not more, to do with time as it does with money. Our current K-5 school week has 1800 minutes (30 hours). Our analysis of time and curriculum demonstrated that in order to meet the academic expectations of the core subjects, excluding World Language, and still leave time for lunch and recess, that we require 1840 minutes per week. We look forward to reopening negotiations with the CEA in an effort to lengthen the school day, with the hope that the change would take effect in September 2014. If/when we get the longer school day, we will look closely at adding World Language to the elementary school program; until then, we are not willing to take time away from the core subjects which we believe are critical to provide the foundation for reducing opportunity/achievement gaps.

Question 6: On Page 7: Can you describe in greater detail what the Framingham ELL program consists of?

Answer: CPS is a partner in a federal grant that allows 11 of our teachers to get a Masters Degree in English as a Second Language at no charge to the teacher. The graduate program is

delivered by Framingham State College. The grant also includes funding for us to hire an ELL Coach for our existing teachers, effective September, 2013.

Question 7: On Page 10: What is the rate of College Success? Do we know how many students from CRLS complete college?

Answer: We are working with the CRLS leadership to develop a more complete way to track students once they graduate.

Question 8: When the School Committee voted in favor of adopting the Innovation Agenda, I asked for a rough estimate of what the overall cost would be, yet the question remains unanswered. We do know that four schools are to be renovated, that each school is going to be hiring a principal and an assistant principal, that each school will be hiring a psychologist, and that each school will be hiring a clerk. We also know that a math coach and an English-immersion teacher will be hired. I am certain that some of the costs will be offset by cost reductions in other areas, but considering that we do now have some basic knowledge of what positions we'll be looking to fill, and how much it costs to renovate the buildings, I feel it both necessary and reasonable to expect an answer on rough estimates for how much this will cost. At a bare minimum, I would like to receive a five-year projection of how much it will cost to implement the Innovation Agenda. Will there be increased levels of hiring as we move deeper into implementation of the Innovation Agenda?

Answer: The Innovation Agenda was implemented in SY12/13 with the opening of 4 new upper schools. The net increase to the FY12/13 School Department Budget specifically attributable to the Innovation was \$600K (see page 18 of the FY12/13 Adopted Budget). Overall, the School Department's budget increased by 3% as compared to the FY11/12 budget.

The FY13/14 Adopted Budget for the School Department is 3.8% more than the FY12/13 Adopted Budget. The budget allocation for FY13/14 from the City was based on the estimated cost of salary and benefit increases required for existing staff, and increases to costs such as student transportation and special education tuition. The FY13/14 Adopted Budget includes \$1.5 million in initiatives, including new staff for the upper schools; however, these increases were funded by budget reductions of \$1.5 million. Descriptions of these initiatives and reductions are provided on pages 16 to 19 of the FY13/14 Adopted Budget. The new expenses specifically associated with the upper schools are: 4.0 FTE Coach-Interventionist; 1.0 FTE Sheltered English Immersion teacher; 2.0 FTE School Psychologist; funding for the upper school athletic program and \$25,000 for the Cambridge School Volunteers to support the Learning Centers at the upper schools and the Amigos School.

A five year projection of School Department expenditures is provided on page 330 of the FY13/14 Adopted Budget. Projected annual increases over the next five years are between 4.0 and 4.4%.

Question 9: Is there a sense of what further expenditures will be necessary the deeper we get into this process? Is there a sense of what other support positions might be created or might become necessary?

Answer: We are starting the new school year confident that we have an appropriate staffing level for the upper schools. As a part of the annual budget process, we will review our staffing patterns and make adjustments as necessary. At this time, we do not anticipate major additional expenditures in the upper schools.

Question 10: What are the building costs estimated to be, and what are the program costs estimated to be?

Answer: The City Manager has incorporated all costs associated with the new Martin Luther King building into the long-range capital plan. Beyond that, the Manager has included estimates for the next two buildings in line—the King Open/Cambridge Street Upper School and the Tobin Montessori/Vassal Lane Upper School—in the City’s long range plan.

Question 11: Will the hours of the Family Liaisons be increased in the coming year? Related to that, what financial resources will be devoted to paying for community engagement work? What is the total amount budgeted for this work, and where in the budget is it coming from?

Answer: There is no change budgeted for Family Liaisons in the upcoming school year. A budget of \$15,000 has been allocated to support the work of the City of Cambridge Community Engagement Team. This allocation will help CPS find new ways to communicate and build relationships with all of our families, including immigrant and linguistic minority families. During the past school year, all Principals and Family Liaisons have engaged in professional development with Dr. Karen Mapp around improving family engagement at all of our schools. In the upcoming year, the Family Engagement Task force will be creating a strategic plan for engaging more families in meaningful ways that support their children’s achievement in school.

Question 12: I would like to know how CPS is engaging students and their families who leave the system to determine why they left and where they went, how responses are tracked and how the data collected is used, if at all, to create programs, teacher training, outreach efforts or anything else that is more likely to keep students in the District or to pull them into the District in the first place.

Answer: We will develop a plan for collecting information from the families who leave CPS about the reason for their decision to depart. We will use these data to inform further planning to address any identified areas of weakness or dissatisfaction.

Question 13: I would also like to know if, with a consistent 5 year drop in 6-8 enrollment, we're rethinking the number of middle school classrooms we'll need as part of our building plans.

Answer: The district's current configuration of 4 upper schools & the Amigos middle school program and number of classrooms for students in grades 6, 7 and 8 are aligned with our enrollment projections for students in these grades. The average class size for students in grades 6, 7 and 8 was 20 in the school year that has just finished and projected to be 20 in the upcoming school year.

Question 14: Throughout the School Committee's request for capital improvement work on the King Open School, Council members were led to believe that should they not support such improvements, they would be perceived as not standing behind the Innovation Agenda. However, during the most recent budget discussions, the Superintendent remarked that current capital improvement plans are wholly a separate topic from the Innovation Agenda. As we spend over \$500 billion on school infrastructure improvement and the subsequent debt service, how have the Superintendent and the School Committee adapted the building plans to plan for space for future program development that addresses the goals set forth in the Innovation Agenda, including expanding early childhood education, wraparound programs and world language programs? Additionally, due to the level of urgency that has been attached to the building program, the City will spend approximately \$25M/year on debt service. Such a number could be lower if the City were to take a less aggressive approach towards timing. If, as the Superintendent mentioned, the building program is separate from the Innovation Agenda, has there been consideration as to whether a less aggressive building program would leave more funds available for later use by teachers, students, and programmatic investments that are related to the Innovation Agenda. If so, what were these trade-off considerations? While I am not advocating not to invest in the buildings, I would like to understand as best as possible what trade-offs were considered throughout the planning process.

Answer: While related, the Capital and Operating budgets are quite distinct. The City Manager weighs the trade-offs within the overall City capital budget. At CPS, we are always in the business of weighing and balancing the educational needs of the school district. Our aim in the past several years has been to try to do fewer things very well rather than many things half-well.

Question 15: Research has time and time again demonstrated that youngsters who participate in a high-quality preschool program demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, more socially responsible behavior, and make significantly higher earnings as an adult. We must invest in early childhood education to ensure that each and every child in Cambridge has the opportunity to attend preschool. What would be the cost to expand this program to every child in Cambridge? We should have a long-term plan in place for space for pre-k because we are currently making investments in developing space.

Answer: The School Committee passed a motion at their June 18, 2013 meeting asking the superintendent and his staff to work with the city administration to develop a list of issues that need to be addressed with the goal of the development and implementation of a universal four year old program.” Cost and space analysis will be done in conjunction with the planning process.

Question 16: For years, several Councilors, teachers, and members of the community have expressed their concerns regarding the large number of families that opt to send their children to charter schools, private schools, and schools outside of the district as well as insufficient policies regarding family outreach and engagement. When parents opt to send their kids to private school it reduces the overall diversity of our district. As we continue to expand the scope of the programs in which the District partakes, how can we properly complete outreach to families that opt not to send their children to our public schools for programmatic reasons to make them aware of these developments? How can we improve our current family engagement strategy to heighten the progress of our students?

Answer: Please see the response to question 12.

Question 17: At present, the City of Cambridge has one of the highest per-pupil-expenditure rates throughout the Commonwealth, but benchmark survey assessments demonstrate that our students are nowhere near performing at level that reflects such high expenditure rates. How do the Superintendent and the School Committee plan to reallocate funds to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent on improving the ability of our students to grow and thrive? What strategies do they plan to employ to provide our teachers with professional development training? What are the anticipated long-term costs of the changes to existing programs to allow for improvement for the Innovation Agenda? Councilors have repeatedly shown a willingness to invest in success. What additional expenditures would be required to attain the levels of success residents expect to be commiserate with our willingness to invest in the education of our youth population?

Answer: We conduct an annual budget process/review in order to strengthen programs. One of our major goals going into FY15, with a new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction on board, is to develop a strong, focused, system-wide professional development program for our teachers. At this time, we cannot state specific expenditures required to implement that professional development plan; we believe that the funding is currently available in our operating and grant funds, but that it needs to be used more strategically.

cc: Cambridge School Committee
Richard Rossi, City Manager
Sandra Albano, City Council Office