

Cohasset School Committee

Budget Message for Fiscal 2018

Background

The annual budget is the financial expression of the educational objectives of the Cohasset School District. It is more than just a financial instrument and requires on the part of the School Committee, Superintendent, Administrators, Staff and the community, orderly and cooperative effort to ensure the educational goals of the District are clearly determined and realized.

For Fiscal 2018 the School Committee is characterizing the budget as “needs-based” in an effort to provide at a minimum level-services. With the “needs” broadly defined to include responses to enrollment trends, the reality of changing student demographics and associated necessary services, contractual obligations, and resources to meet Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) requirements and other legislative mandates. As well, the School Committee and Administration will consider budget proposals that reflect the Student Achievement priorities and community expectations for excellence and equitable access to education for all students.

Student Achievement Priorities

Student Achievement is at the heart of all School Committee and District decisions. The School Committee supports the following Student Achievement priorities as set out by the District Leadership for Fiscal 2018. These priorities are directly related to the adopted Cohasset Public Schools Strategic Plan and Technology Plan and are supported by the School Committee’s and the Administration’s goals.

District Wide Literacy Needs:

- Review literacy at the elementary and secondary levels through thorough evaluation of assessment data and new DESE curriculum frameworks.
- Critically appraise all literacy curriculums and potentially recommend staffing improvements.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) & Universal Design for Learning (UDL):

- Invest in and develop SEL program at the High School to provide continuity from the Positive Behavioral Intervention System (PBIS) program at the middle and elementary schools.
- Advance professional development for SEL and UDL at all grade levels.
- Reaffirm need for Transitional ESP position at the High School to ensure that those students transitioning back from medical or out of school absences, or concussed students, are integrated into the full school day routine at an appropriate pace and rigor.

Middle School Review:

- Implement the recommendations of the external review of middle school special education services including: staffing, structure and delivery services to ensure our students are getting the optimal amount of needed services and instruction.
- Integrate recommendations on staffing and curriculum from broader middle school program (e.g. structure, instructional practices and assessment procedures) to advance student outcomes.

Digital Learning Initiative:

- Support the ongoing rollout via continued instructional technology professional development.

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- Support necessary staffing to sustain digital learning rollout. Consideration will be given to DESE recommended staffing levels for Instructional Technology and Network/Helpdesk positions.
- Support the additional capital investment in Chromebook devices at the middle school and high school to support equity in the Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) model.

Curriculum Advancement:

- Review recommendations regarding Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) curriculum based on new DESE curriculum frameworks.
- Study staffing levels in non-core subject areas such as physical education at the elementary levels and arts at the secondary level.
- Evaluate staffing of literacy and math specialist at Osgood and Deer Hill.
- Review Osgood STARS programs and staffing levels for this new program.
- Support staffing needs that frequently get deferred in the budget process and are based on subscription and class-size concerns.

Budget Guidelines

The following are additional parameters that the Cohasset School Committee incorporated in the budget message for Fiscal 2018:

- Utilize zero-based budgeting approach for personnel costs, contractual obligations and special education tuitions and transportation. Other costs are projected according to past usage and market prices
- Allocate revolving fund revenues prudently to offset some expense related to the source of that revenue.
- Encourage the Administration to continue to seek and secure all possible sources of state, federal, and other special funds that will enhance educational opportunities for all Cohasset students.
- Develop enrollment projections to determine assignment of resources by individual school. The School Committee recognizes that class size is one of many important considerations in good education and is a community concern.
- Utilize data, projections, and other key information provided by the Administration to enable the School Committee to make comparisons and estimate future budget needs.
- Monitor and adjust the delivery of in-district special education services based on recommendations from the Administration, mandated guidelines, and legal requirements.
- Promote Student Achievement by staying current in curriculum, technology and materials based on recommendations from the Administration and Staff. Support and modify curriculum based on data gathered through assessments.
- Leverage the approved Strategic Plan and Technology Plan, as well as School Improvement Plans, the District Leadership goals and the School Committee Goals, to shape budget priorities.
- Benchmark and adjust fee schedules periodically to support the delivery of services to students and the community. For Fiscal 2018, review and make recommendations regarding (i) transportation and (ii) pre-K & kindergarten fee schedules.
- Continue to support the “One Community” initiative with the Town to collaborate and utilize economy of scale opportunities, particularly as it relates to technology, security and building maintenance plans.

- Request capital funding from Town to support on-going security and technology initiatives and support facilities and bus leases. The School Committee appreciates the support the district has received from the Town in the on-going rollout and investment in the Technology Plan and district-wide security initiatives.
- Work with the Town Manager and Town committees to advocate for resources for the Cohasset School District, while recognizing that the community voted to adopt Fiscal Management Policies in February 2012.
- Review year-end fiscal balances and after discussion with School Committee, Superintendent, and Town Manager to determine deposits into Special Education Stabilization Fund and future investments in the district.

Conclusion

This document constitutes the Cohasset School Committee's Budget Message for Fiscal 2018 and should be used as a guide for development of the school district budget by the Superintendent and Administrators.

We look forward to working with the Superintendent, Administration, school employees, Town committees, Town Manager and the community at large on developing the Fiscal 2018 budget in order to achieve the priorities for Student Achievement in the Cohasset Public Schools.