

Cohasset School Committee Budget Message for Fiscal 2019

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 2019 the School Committee is characterizing the budget as “needs-based” in order 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 Administration for Fiscal 2019. 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.

The District initiated in 2016-2017 program reviews of Literacy, Social Emotional Learning, and the Middle School. It is the Committee’s desire to support the outputs of those reviews to enhance and strengthen our student’s experiences and achievements in Cohasset.

District Wide Literacy Needs:

- Endorse the recommendations from the Early Literacy Study regarding kindergarten to 5th grade English Language Arts curriculum.

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

- Support the creation of a District Wellness Committee and continue to expand the ongoing partnerships with Safe Harbor Coalition and Dr. Barbara Green.
- Sustain and support the professional development of our staff in SEL and UDL.

Middle School Review:

- Begin the implementation of recommendations from the New England League of Middle School League (NELMS) report and the Middle School Steering Committee.

Digital Learning Initiative:

- Monitor and adjustment, as necessary, the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) model to ensure capital budget support.
- Support and sustain professional development for staff in digital instruction.

Curriculum Advancement:

- Assess impact of diverse learners to district professional development and staffing.
- Consider need to increase Osgood STARS program staffing based on changes in service delivery needs.
- Assess the impact of continued growth in enrollment at the high school on core curriculum staffing, particularly English courses.
- Consider expansion of co-teaching model for English and Math to grades 7 and 10.
- Develop and support the Massachusetts 2016 framework for Digital Literacy & Computer Science curriculum framework as outlined in the District Strategic Plan.

Budget Guidelines

The following are additional parameters that the Cohasset School Committee incorporated in the budget message for Fiscal 2019:

District Considerations:

- Utilize needs-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 Administration goals and the School Committee Goals, to shape budget priorities.

Town Considerations:

- 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 Reserve Fund and future investments in the district.

Conclusion

This document constitutes the Cohasset School Committee's Budget Message for Fiscal 2019 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 2019 budget in order to achieve the priorities for Student Achievement in the Cohasset Public Schools.