

Monday, January 10, 2022
Staffing Recommendations & Budget Development
Questions & Answers

PTC Budget Study Questions

41. Will you be sharing data at the upcoming BOE meeting that provides more context and background for the requests for psychologists and social workers?

Yes

42. Is there data showing student and family requests for mental health services by elementary, middle school, and high school level? How have those numbers changed in the last five years?

Yes, see rational sheets for each position which can be found in the appendix of the presentation.

43. Would you anticipate these trends to continue in the near future?

The trend of increasing mental health needs predates the pandemic. The pandemic has been a catalyst for these requests. As we move forward, the increased focus both on specific interventions with students and the ongoing positive psychology and wellness work across the District should address many of these needs. We do feel these additional resources will be sufficient for the foreseeable future.

44. Does the District have data or anecdotal information on usage of mental health resources by minority students?

We do not track those types of statistics. Anecdotally, there does not seem to be an increase across a specific group but a general rise in need.

45. As the district requests staffing additions in mental health, is it a priority to add mental health professionals who can serve both the general and the underserved populations?

We absolutely keep the demographics of our population in mind when hiring for any position, especially mental health clinicians. Some of the more traditional underserved populations are not large parts of the Scarsdale student body but, we have a number of

different cultures and international families. We also use a number of hiring procedures to try and attract candidates from varying backgrounds.

46. What will be the aggregate savings in having these proposed positions in house?

These are additional positions for this year. We are currently contracting with an outside service for the equivalent of 1 FTE social worker at SHS, the cost of hiring will be commensurate depending on the experience of the individual hired. The other positions are not being contracted for so they would be an additional cost. The SMS Support program will provide savings in the lessening of reliance on outside placements.

47. Will the Bridge Program be at Quaker Ridge or the Middle School?

There will be a section at each. This year additional students joined the program who will need to transition next year to SMS. We expect 2 students to remain at QRS and 3 to move to the MS.

48. Would you please give more detail on the rationale behind converting 14 temporary positions to 6 permanent ones?

The District has employed 14 part-time 10-month Clerks across the seven schools and District office (though the headcount currently stands at 10 due to recent resignations), positions represented by the SAES unit. The part-time status (no more than 17 hours/week) makes the position noncompetitive from a Civil Service standpoint. Historically, there have been three primary assignments for these individuals:

- Two clerks have shared responsibilities as the second office staff member alongside the Secretary to Principal at our three smaller elementary schools- Edgewood, Greenacres, and Heathcote (6 total positions).
- Three clerks have served at the Middle School as production (copying) support a few days each week. Along with two Aides, these five individuals essentially cover two full time positions.
- Five clerks have provided additional office/clerical support to Fox Meadow (1), the Middle School (1), the High School (2), and the District Special Education office (1).

This proposal to shift from part-time to full-time 10-month clerks has arisen over time from changes in our needs, and in our practices. First, the elementary offices require steady, full-day coverage instead of support that is stitched together with different individuals. The

demands of parent communication, safety and security, attendance, and other responsibilities require that the smaller elementary schools have a level of coverage similar to FM and QR. There can also be better cross training in the event of an absence, as we have been able to accomplish in FM and QR. Second, as our copiers have become networked and printing jobs are easier to accomplish, the need for copying support at the Middle School has waned. Third, the turnover we are experiencing in positions that do not carry full time hours or benefits is making it difficult to fill vacancies in this function.

The result is that we propose eliminating all the remaining part-time 10-month Clerk positions and replacing them with 6 full-time, 10-month Clerk positions.

- Current cost for 35 hours/week = \$36,000; New cost for 35 hours = \$38,500 plus approximately \$15,000 in benefits per person = total additional cost of \$105,000.
- 6 full-time 10-month clerks to be assigned to ED, GA, HE, SMS, SHS and District Office.
- The District will offer incumbent Clerks not eligible or interested in the new positions 25 hour/week Aide positions (regular attrition makes this viable without layoffs).

49. In addition to the proposed salaries, what would be the costs of medical insurance, pensions, and any other post-employment benefits?

See above.

50. Would you be able to give us historical data for what clerical positions trends have been in the last five years at the different schools to provide context for this request?

Clerical staffing has increased slightly over the past five years. The additions have been 0.3 FTE (Athletics) and 0.2 FTE (SMS Psychology Secretary) during this time. Secretarial support at each school has remained unchanged during this time.

51. Is the Teacher on Special Assignment position drawn from existing staff or is this a proposed new FTE?

The position will be filled by an existing staff member but their classroom replacement will be a new temporary (two year) FTE.

52. Has there been discussion by District Cabinet about centralizing psychology services across the district to deploy services where and when needed?

Not as a serious consideration.

- a. Is this possible? Yes but...
- b. Can centralization give you more flexibility with resources?

Although counter intuitive, having centralized psychology services would limit flexibility for a number of reasons:

1. Psychologists are resources for a building that provide a number of duties aside from counseling. On the elementary level they provide classroom lessons, help with discipline, consultation to teachers, on the moment interventions for struggling students, 504 case management, and act as 3rd in the chain of command in emergencies. On the secondary level, psychologists are part of our PSTs, emergency response and threat assessment teams, act as consultants for teachers throughout the day, and help administration as thought partners around wellness. These duties on both levels, require a deep knowledge of the school and culture and do not happen on a repeating schedule making it difficult if not impossible with a centralized system.
2. Given the nature of counseling intervention and the way students process emotions at different developmental ages, psychologists spend as much time doing ad hoc intervention as students come into their offices as they do formal scheduled counseling sessions.
3. The most effective psychologists' practice in a school building is defined by their relationships with the staff and their ability to use those relationships to influence practice in the classroom for kids. In a centralized system those relationships are much harder to develop.

- c. Would centralization turn into cost savings?

While centralization might result in more efficient scheduling of specific counseling sessions, it would be at great cost to the essential parts psychologists play in their buildings.

53. Is there more detail as to what would be required of an additional groundskeeper? Is there a list of additional tasks or projects the groundskeeper team would be required to perform?

The details for this request can be found on pages 36, 64 and 65 of the [Staffing Recommendations and Budget Development Presentation](#) which was shared at the Board meeting on January 10, 2021.

54. Enrollment has declined about 3% since 2012-2013. Are there more granular data available to see how many students of different abilities are coming to, or being brought back, to the district and how many students have left the district? In other words, is there more detail to what leads to that net number?

Please see the relevant data presented at the January 24th presentation on Special Education. The first 13 slides focus on the current trends in special education students including the number of students in outside placements. We have had an increase in the number of special education students in the District (partially from families moving in) and a decrease in both absolute numbers and by percentage in the students utilizing outside placements. The percentage of parentally placed students in special education schools has also declined slightly as a percentage of the special education population.

55. In the same time period, staffing has increased 9%. Are these enrollment and staffing trends what you anticipate for the near future as well?

It is difficult to know for certain, but the two trends are, and have been, a slow decline in enrollment, which is projected to level off in the next 2 years, and an increase in staffing that is largely associated with Special Education. Based on the presentation referenced above, the Special Education staffing inclusive of the proposed additions should roughly complete the growth that was commensurate with our increasing SPED enrollments.

56. Will the associated spending rise impact the leverage ratio and other fiscal ratios which Moody's uses as part of its rating methodology? (Slide 16)

Some of these may be impacted. However, it is anticipated that staffing increases would be funded with offsetting tax revenues.

57. Why are civil service staff not within the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) numbers?

The only civil service staff not within the FTE are our Teacher Aides and our Bus Drivers, all of whom are considered part-time employees. We report these areas in their own respective parts of the budget book- Appendix F for Aides, and Section III- Pupil Transportation (page 48).

58. How do the part-time civil service staff impact the numbers and the budget?

The Teacher Aides budget in the current year is \$5,347,247 (Appendix F of the annual Budget Book), and the Drivers budget is \$2,669,482.

59. When specifically, is the Special Education report coming out? Could the data in that report help provide taxpayers and parents more content and context about your overall initiatives to support special ed students? (Slide 28)

The Department will present to the BOE on 1/24 and that presentation will include current data on trends. There will be a formal 2 year report later in the year.

60. For SMS you stated that there has been a “rise in students with depression and anxiety that impacts access to an equal education.” Will you be sharing data with parents so that parents can understand the extent of this issue? For the high school you did provide data that provided context. **(Eric)**

Please see the rational sheet for the SMS staffing requests.

61. Last year, average spending per student was \$35,000. Do all our schools have the same per student spending? Are there schools that get more or less? What would be the reason for either? **(Stuart)**

If examining gross spending per student per building, then each building would be different based on the salaries of the non-instructional and instructional employees based at each particular building. The number of staff is dependent on student enrollment at each building which determines the number of sections based on the District’s class size norms. All other expenses such as supplies, equipment etc. are based on a per student allocation across the District to assure equitable distribution.

62. Will there be more budget details in the near future that show directly how the District’s 13 Budget Development Guiding Factors are supported with dollar amounts? For example, how much is allotted to Global Citizenship Education? Student support, etc. (Slide 5)

The budget does not at this time specifically label each item in this manner.

63. Are building specific budgets publicly available? (Slide 13)

No

64. With flu season here and rises in Covid cases, what number of substitute teachers and tutors might need to be contracted? If that is a rise from previous years, by how much will the associated spending rise?

Our tutoring plan is costing a significant amount of money compared to a “normal” school year. We anticipate the tutoring costs to be \$225,000 over budget, but this was accounted

for in our \$800,000 Covid allocation in the current year budget. Our need for substitute teachers is up about 30% from a normal year as well, though it has begun to decline as this spike wanes.

65. How many teachers retired last year and how many do you anticipate retiring this year? What will be the budget impact in terms of post-employment benefits? (Slide 14)

Last year we had a total of 17 retirements. We have 7 teacher retirements this year. The sole post-employment benefit that has a cost to the district is the health plan. Since we are self-insured, the cost is directly measured by usage for all medical costs. Our plan coordinates with Medicare, which is the primary payer for retirees aged 65 and over.

66. Do you anticipate that you will receive 4% of revenues for our schools from State aid? If there were to be a decrease, by how much might that increase the tax levy?

The District should receive at or near 4% of revenues from State Aid. Unless aid increases year to year to keep pace with budget increases and all other budget items remain equal then tax levy is ultimately impacted.

67. The term 'best practices' is used throughout the presentation. How do you define 'best practices'? Where can parents and taxpayers see examples of what that means?

Best practices refers to generally accepted methods that are superior to others. This can be from a pedagogical standpoint such as elementary class size or operational such as cleaning standards. Best practices are based on the education, professional training/development and experience of our teachers, administrators and directors. They can also be based on professional journals or state, national or international studies.

68. Are there publicly available documents that explain the assessment process or metrics that are used to determine staffing requests? (Slide 6)

Not other than the additional slides 20, 21, 22, 23 found in the [presentation](#).

69. Slide 10 says 'Citizen input'? Are resident taxpayers also encouraged to give input during the budget process?

Yes, through public comment and e-mail.

70. When will data be available for 2020-2021 about mental health issues in the high school? (Slide 32) Please see the rational sheet for the staffing requests and Mr. Bonamo's

presentation to the BOE on 1/10/22. Additionally, please see the 1/24 special education presentation.

71. What is your view on the scientific thinking about COVID transmission and surface cleaning to prevent virus transmission? Does that impact the number of custodial staff proposed?

According to the CDC the risk of COVID transmission from surfaces is low. The staffing additions to our custodial department in the current year and the recommendation to add another cleaner for the 2022-23 budget, however, are based on Best Practice cleaning standards as described in the presentation on pages 37 and 38. Although the pandemic exasperated these needs last year and additional temporary cleaners were hired they were not renewed in the current year. Current cleaning practices utilize hydrolyzed water which acts as a disinfectant while not increasing time on task. The District's use of this cleaning method has been extremely positive.

73. Are you anticipating any reductions in funding to our schools due to tax reimbursements as part of the *certiorari* process?

The certiorari process would only reduce funding when there are same year settlements that have missed the assessment role to which the school's tax is levied upon. This is rarely the case so that typically funding (the tax levy) isn't reduced but rather levied over a smaller total assessment pool.