

WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



PROPOSED FY'17 OPERATING BUDGET EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEVELOPED BY:

JOHN ANTONUCCI, *SUPERINTENDENT*
EMILY PARKS, *ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT*
HEATH PETRACCA, *DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE*
ABIGAIL HANSCOM, *DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES*

**AND THE ADMINISTRATORS, FACULTY AND STAFF
OF THE WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**





WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

January 21, 2016

Dear Westwood School Committee and Westwood Residents,

I am pleased to present to you an Executive Summary of the *FY'17 Superintendent's Recommended Budget*. This document is a “big-picture” overview, but one that also provides detailed explanations of our budget requests. It is written with the goal that any Westwood resident can read it and fully understand the school budget. I hope you find it clear, concise, and easy-to-read, as one of my primary goals is to provide a high level of transparency during the budget process. As in past years, you will notice the use of a “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)” format and a table of contents for easy reference.

My budget request, which calls for a 5.97% increase over FY'16, is the most ambitious I have presented since 2007, which was the last time the Westwood community approved a Proposition 2 ½ override. Although it is a larger increase than I would prefer, it addresses critical needs that have either been ignored or deferred while the Town recovered from the 2008 economic downturn. During this period, and despite calls from its constituency to decrease class sizes and enhance programming, the School Committee “held the line” and approved responsible, but lean, budgets over the last several years. I should also note that during the same time period, enrollment at Thurston Middle School and Westwood High School has grown to historic highs.

There are signs now that our local economy has improved substantially in the last two years, which is partly attributable to the long-awaited University Station development, but also due to a generally-improving economy in the Commonwealth and throughout the country. We saw evidence of this at the most recent Town Meeting in November, when residents were asked by the Selectmen to consider several new spending initiatives, including: design costs for building projects, the creation of a “stabilization” account, land purchases, and increased funding for future liabilities. This future-oriented thinking is a sign of a well-managed town and an approach that typically I applaud. However, after several years of tight budgets and a highly conservative approach to managing the school department, I would caution we should not plan for the future while sacrificing the present. Specifically, if the community has sufficient resources, it is critical that our *annual operating budgets* are adequate to support the high level of services our residents expect and demand. With respect to this budget request, I believe there is no better investment we can make in Westwood's *future* than ensuring that our 3,200 students have a first-class education *now*. We have only one shot to educate our students and our schools must be a top priority.

“...I would caution we should not plan for the future while sacrificing the present...We have only one shot to educate our students and our schools must be a top priority.”

I am confident that my message – that schools should be a top priority – is one shared by the vast majority of Westwood residents, many of whom moved to this town *for* the schools. This past fall I embarked on a speaking tour and had the opportunity to speak with hundreds of our

constituents. Two themes emerged. First, it became clear that residents did not feel informed about the workings of our local government, including the schools. Residents expressed a great deal of interest in how decisions are made, how priorities are established, and how we communicate to our constituents. Second, and not surprisingly, residents view Westwood as an elite community and expect that services are commensurate with that status. I built this budget, and have formed my communication strategy around it, with these two themes in mind. Specifically, I am well aware that my budget proposal, which calls for a 5.97% increase, is ambitious. Yet, it is critical to me that we have public dialogue about the school department needs every year. The only way to have a thoughtful, well-informed conversation as a community about our needs and priorities is for the School Department to fully articulate what those needs and priorities are and to provide ample information to understand the costs associated with a high-quality program. As I have said for many years, in order to maintain the quality of our programs and services, the community should expect to see annual increases in the range of 3.0% to 5.0%. This expected increase is due to the many costs that are essentially fixed, legally-mandated, or simply unavoidable. (The cost associated with Special Education services is one prime example). When developing this budget, I have also considered the feedback I have gotten from constituents about their concerns around class sizes – specifically enrollment numbers that many parents feel are too high for a community such as ours. This budget request, while not as all-encompassing as I would like, begins to address this concern.

Finally, this is an exciting time in the Westwood Public Schools. Our students continue to perform well academically and our graduates report that they are well-prepared for their college experiences. Our arts and athletic programs are thriving. Our faculty has been recognized as highly-skilled and invested in their students' learning. Within this context of success, we are able to consider "what's next" and think carefully about our students' educational experience. We have begun the process of reviewing our science program and are expanding students' exposure to computer science and engineering. We are working to increase our students' access to elective programs in social sciences and the arts. We have implemented and grown our senior independent project program to provide an opportunity for a capstone high school experience. This budget request includes modest increases to allow this exciting work to continue so that the district continues to improve and move forward. I would be remiss if I didn't advocate for this type of investment in our students.

Before you read the summary, I want to point out the major highlights of my FY'17 budget request. More detail can be found later in the document.

- A 5.97% increase over FY'16; no cuts to programs or services.
- An increase of \$404,962 to Special Education accounts.
- One additional school bus at a cost of \$64,800 to accommodate new students at University Station.
- A contractual increase of \$28,800 in School Bus Transportation.
- Increased Fixtures, Furniture & Equipment (FF&E), Technology, and miscellaneous non-salary accounts by an aggregate of \$129,050.
- Added a total of 9.65 FTE new personnel district-wide. This total includes:
 - 2.10 FTE Special Education staff that are required due to students' legally-mandated Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).
 - 3.45 FTE teachers/IAs to mitigate high class sizes at all levels.
 - 1.0 FTE Engineering/Computer Science teacher at Thurston Middle School to expand new program launched in FY'16

- 1.5 FTE Elementary Science Coordinator/Science Content Specialist
- 1.0 FTE Social Worker and a 0.6 FTE Music teacher at Westwood High School.

I hope this budget document helps residents understand what it takes to operate the school system. Although we certainly face some budgetary challenges this year, our students continue to receive a first-class education. On behalf of our faculty and staff, I thank Westwood residents for their unwavering support of their public schools.



TABLE OF CONTENTS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

	<u>PAGE</u>
What is the FY’17 School Department budget request?	4
What are the major budget categories?	4
What are the changes to the budget – FY’16 to FY’17?	5
Can you explain how “unavoidable costs” impact the school budget?	6
Do high class sizes continue to be an issue at Westwood High School?	7
Are there new positions in the high school budget to address high class sizes?	8
Are there other priorities at Westwood High School?	9
What are the budget priorities at Thurston Middle School?	11
What are the budget priorities at the Elementary level?	12
What accounts for the \$404,962 increase in Special Education?	13
What are the increases to non-salary accounts?	14
Does this budget cut any programs or services?	15
Is this the final FY’17 budget?	15



LOOK FOR THIS SYMBOL WHICH MARKS ANY MENTION OF PERSONNEL ADDITIONS OR CHANGES



LOOK FOR THIS SYMBOL WHICH MARKS IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

WHAT IS THE FY'17 SCHOOL DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST?

As the table below illustrates, my recommended budget for FY'17 totals \$42,273,903, which represents a 5.97% increase over FY'16.

Final FY'16 Budget	\$ 39,891,136
Proposed FY'17 Budget	\$ 42,273,903
Increase (\$)	\$ 2,382,767
Increase (%)	5.97%

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR BUDGET CATEGORIES?

The following table breaks down the total budget into five major categories. As you can see, **salaries**, by far, are the greatest budget driver. Salaries account for 83.2% of the overall budget, which is consistent with past years.

Major Budget Category	FY'16 Budget	Proposed FY'17 Budget	Incremental Change (\$)	Incremental Change (%)
Total Salaries	33,338,876	35,205,736	1,866,860	5.60%
Special Education (non-salary)	1,817,631	2,096,593	278,962	15.35%
Utilities	1,432,650	1,432,650	-	0.00%
Operations and Maintenance (non-salary)	818,225	928,225	110,000	13.44%
All other non-salary	2,483,754	2,610,699	126,945	5.11%
TOTAL	39,891,136	42,273,903	2,382,767	5.97%



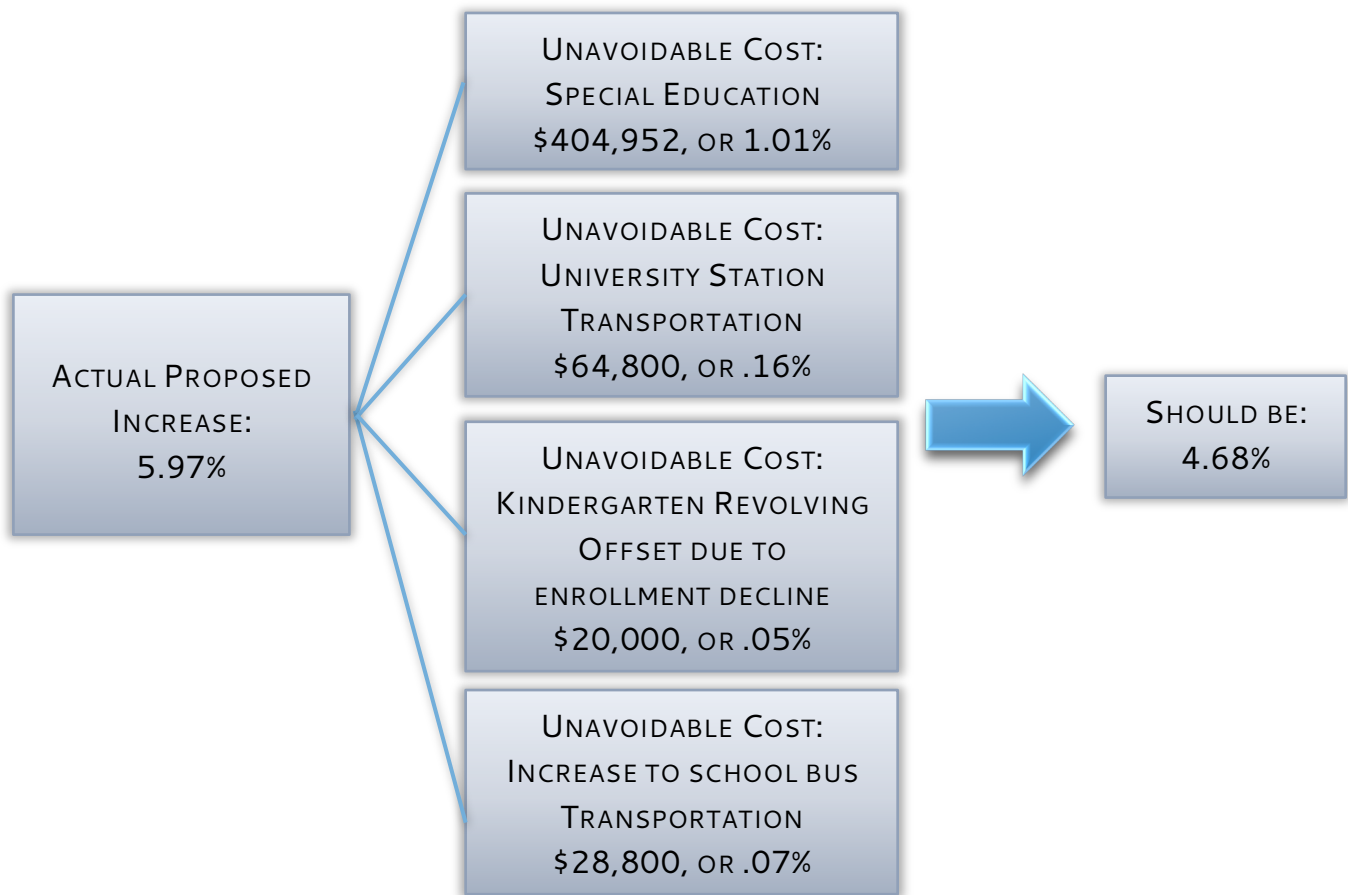
WHAT ARE THE CHANGES TO THE BUDGET? FY'16 TO FY'17

The following chart lists all of the changes included in my budget proposal. It is intended to show the progression from the Final FY'16 Budget to my FY'17 Recommended Budget. In short, it is “how the budget is built”.

Budget Request	FTE (if personnel)	Budget Impact
Final FY'16 Budget	-	39,891,136
Increase salaries for existing personnel (Contractual)	-	1,250,360
Increase to Fixtures, Furniture, and Equipment (FF&E), Technology, and Miscellaneous non-salary accounts	-	129,050
Decrease Kindergarten revolving fund offset due to declining enrollment	-	20,000
Add one school bus to accommodate new students at University Station	-	64,800
Increase School Bus Transportation (Contractual)	-	28,800
Increase Shared Technology Management account to reflect actual salary expenses (municipal/school shared cost)	-	33,000
Athletics: Increase budget to reflect actual expenses; increase coaching staff to accommodate increased participation	-	34,795
Special Education: Out-of-District Tuition	-	176,190
Special Education: Transportation	-	32,772
Special Education: Full funding for Lesley Intern program	-	70,000
Special Education: New personnel to meet requirements of students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)	2.10	126,000
High School: Add 1.0 FTE High School Social Studies teacher (class size mitigation)	1.00	60,000
High School: Add 1.0 FTE High School Social Worker	1.00	60,000
High School: Add 0.6 FTE High School Music teacher	0.60	36,000
High School: Add 0.75 English teacher (class size mitigation)	0.75	45,000
High School: Add 0.45 SIPP teacher (class size mitigation)	0.45	27,000
Thurston: Add 1.0 FTE Engineering/Computer Science teacher	1.00	60,000
Thurston: Add 0.25 FTE English teacher (class size mitigation)	0.25	15,000
Deerfield: Retain 1.0 Instructional Assistant added in FY'16 (class size mitigation)	1.00	24,000
Elementary: Add 1.5 FTE Elementary Science Coordinator/Science Content Specialist	1.50	90,000
FY'17 Superintendent's Recommended Budget	9.65	42,273,903

CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW “UNAVOIDABLE COSTS” IMPACT THE SCHOOL BUDGET?

Although I presented a (relatively large) increase of 5.97%, the fact is that *at least 1.29%* of that increase is due to **unavoidable costs**. In other words, we have no choice but to fund them. I would put these types of costs in the same category as fixed costs, such as health insurance, that are contained in the municipal budget. To that end, I want to point out that when the overall town budget is developed, these fixed or unavoidable costs are wisely “taken off the top” to determine how much money is then available to fund the various town departments’ operating and capital budgets. I would argue that the costs I highlight below should also be included in this “taken off the top” calculation. That strategy would allow us to make a fairer comparison of all departmental budget requests. **My budget as presented would then represent a 4.68% increase.**



UNIVERSITY STATION

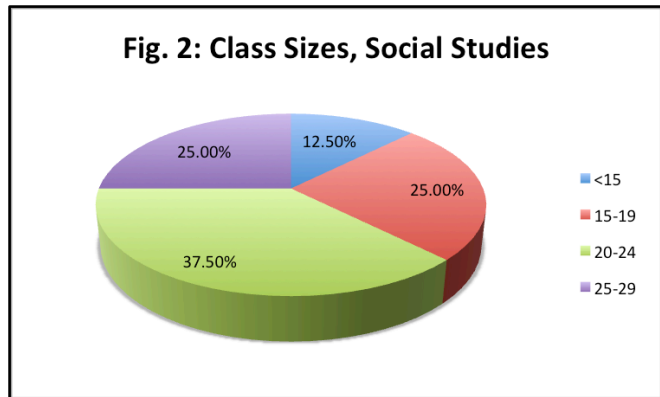
Of particular note is the \$64,800 transportation increase due to student enrollment at University Station. It was promised when this development was proposed that related costs would not come at the expense of existing operating budgets. It is thus my opinion that any University Station expense should be funded above-and-beyond our typical operating budget.

DO HIGH CLASS SIZES CONTINUE TO BE AN ISSUE AT WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL?

Yes. Class sizes are particularly high in two content areas: English and Social Studies. An analysis of class sizes in each department determines our budget priorities for FY'17:

- Social Studies:

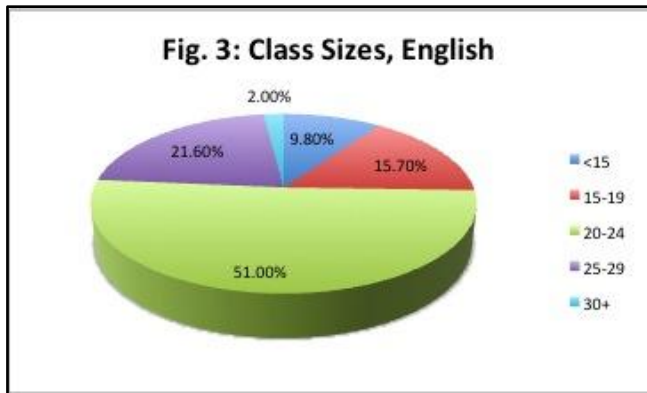
- 25% of Social Studies classes have 25 or more students, with seven classes exceeding 26 students. See figure 2.
- we currently offer 13 sections of Freshman Social Studies (World Civilizations), with class sizes ranging from 12 to 27; without an increase in staffing, five of next year's Freshman sections will have 25 or more students



- more so than any other department, Social Studies is poised for a period of high programmatic growth in the coming: members of the Social Studies department have worked diligently in Fall 2015 to develop a robust selection of seven half-year electives courses in response to community interest. Although it is difficult to predict the popularity of the new courses, the impact of their development is likely to further increase class sizes.

- English:

- currently, 24% of English classes have 25 or more students, with six classes exceeding 27 students. See figure 3.
- we currently offer 13 sections of Freshman English, with class sizes ranging from 11 to 25; if no new sections are added, the *majority* (7) of next year's Freshman sections will have 25 or more students



- we currently offer 10 sections of Senior English courses, with class sizes ranging from 16 to 28; if no new sections are added, seven of next year's ten Senior sections will have 25 or more students

ARE THERE NEW POSITIONS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL BUDGET TO ADDRESS HIGH CLASS SIZES?

Yes. There are a total of 1.75 FTE new teachers at Westwood High School to specifically address the high class sizes noted above. In addition, the proposed budget provides targeted funding for the SIPP program, which in turn positively impacts class sizes in English and Foreign Language. See explanation below.



0.75 FTE English Teacher

In 2016-2017, the English department will experience an increase in class sizes due to the schoolwide net increase of approximately 36 students. Additionally, the department will experience the *reduction* of a section as one of its sections was, this year, absorbed by the principal. This combination of factors - the addition of almost two classes of students and the loss of a teaching section - will push class sizes well beyond the norm of 20-22 students in the recent past. The addition of a 0.75 FTE English teacher would simply offset the increase in student population and provide some relief to increasing class sizes.

1.0 FTE Social Studies Teacher

Just as with the English department, in 2016-2017, the Social Studies department will experience an increase in class sizes due to the schoolwide net increase of approximately 36 students. As the student population has increased, staffing in the department has remained steady at 10 full time teachers teaching 48 classes (9.6 Teaching FTEs), which includes a Department Chair teaching .6 and .4 administrative. Not surprisingly, class sizes have continued to grow. Although it is difficult to predict the popularity of the new courses - which include “Global Conflict and Crises”, “American Pop Culture”, and “Race, Gender, and Society” - the impact of their development is likely to further increase class sizes. Keeping class sizes manageable in these courses will be critical to their growth in this first year of their being offered

0.45 FTE SIPP Teacher

Wrapping up its third year, the Senior Independent Project Program (SIPP) has provided more than 60 students with extraordinary educational experiences, linking them with community partners and mentors and supporting them through the planning and execution of deep, enriching, and challenging senior projects that call on their varied skills and interests and contribute in some way to their community.

In its early stages, the program required little funding, but as it has grown, so has the need for increased investment: until this year, the SIPP class was taught by an administrator, with mentor coordination being compensated through a modest stipend. For 2015-2016, in response to high student interest, we expanded the program to two sections, re-allocating one section from Foreign Languages and offsetting the loss of a section of English by offering a course taught by the principal.

Funding SIPP would result in:

- allowing the Foreign Languages department to recoup the section they lost. Most likely, this reclaimed section will be used to grow the Mandarin program, which is in its third year of development. Splitting our Mandarin 2 and Mandarin 3 classes into separate courses will provide for better instruction for our students

- offsetting the class size impact of losing a section of English due to the inability of the principal to teach a class for a second year

ARE THERE OTHER PRIORITIES AT WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL?

Yes. The proposed budget requests funding for two important priorities: A 1.0 FTE Social Worker, and a 0.6 FTE Music teacher.



1.0 FTE Social Worker

Westwood High School is requesting the addition of a full-time social worker to join the existing Guidance and Psychological staff as a resource for students, staff and parents. The goal of this position is to support interagency outreach and collaboration with local hospitals, day treatment programs and therapists. This proposed position responds to two identified areas: Student Specific Needs and Interagency Collaboration Needs.

Student Specific Needs: Recent data indicates that there is a need for increased support to respond to students who have left or are returning from psychiatric hospitalization/treatment. In anticipation of a student's transition back to WHS, this staff member would provide outreach and support to teachers, parents and students. These students often require significant case management, possible adjustments to course load/schedule, and increased clinical contact during a return. Additionally, this staff member would provide direct 1:1 counseling and group therapy (identified areas include: socialization skills, managing stress, anxiety, grief or other special issues) in a highly responsive, ongoing manner beyond the current capacity of existing WHS staff. This staff member would assist in conducting safety assessments. Additionally, this position would be a key member of the pre-referral and IEP/504 team structure at WHS and provide professional development and consultation to the entire school community.

Interagency Collaboration Needs: This position would allow for dedicated staff time to be spent building relationships with DMH and other local mental health providers and institutions to ensure that needed supports are not left unaccessed. Additionally, this staff member would oversee the comprehensive implementation of the Signs of Suicide program at the high school and liaison with Thurston Middle School so that our students receive organized and aligned programming grades 6-12 in this critical area. Finally, WPS has built collaborative relationships with local higher education institutions for the training of teachers. This position would also coordinate the training of graduate level interns in social work/psychology bringing additional manpower and skill to the District Pre K -12.

0.6 FTE Music Teacher

The growth of the WHS music program has proportionally outpaced the increase in size of the student body. This growth has resulted in two areas that would be addressed by a part-time teacher addition: offering new elective courses that we currently are unable to offer and the reduction of class sizes in key areas.

One of the goals for the performing arts program at WHS is to expand music electives to a wider population of our school community. Currently, the majority of our electives are focused around

performing. This position would allow us to increase the diversity and variety of our course offerings, allowing students to continue with music instruction in areas that are non-performance based. This staffing could result in the development of new elective courses that do not currently exist. Possibilities include:

- A group guitar class
- Another Year 1 piano lab class - this could be done either as a full year course, or a semester course.
- A Year 2 piano lab course for students who want to continue their piano studies.
- A second section of chorus.
- A music history class
- A music production class geared to the production of contemporary music with a focus on music technology, recording, notation software and the history of music production

Currently, the music program is staff with 1.4 FTE teachers. As the population increases at WHS, the number of students interested in the music program is growing: our two bands are currently at about 40 students each with one teacher; chorus has grown to 67 students this year, with one teacher; and we are running three full sections of piano lab, with more students on the waiting list. The addition of another music teacher would allow us the opportunity to offer one or two class sections in these high needs classes.



WHAT ARE THE BUDGET PRIORITIES AT THURSTON MIDDLE SCHOOL?

Thanks to the addition of part time staff over the past several years, class size has been maintained at reasonable levels despite a dramatic increase in enrollment. Thurston reached its peak enrollment last year with 801 students. Enrollment has declined slightly this year, and our current total is 778. Enrollment should hold steady the next few years, and then drop significantly during the 2018-2021 school years. Currently, in the core academic departments, class size ranges are as follows. The number of very large sections (28-30) is down slightly from last year, and these are exclusively grade 6 reading and computer Science and Engineering sections. One reason for the improvement in English class size is that the principal is currently teaching a section of 7th grade English.

Department	15 - 24	25 - 30	28-30
<i>English/Reading</i>	38	8	3
<i>Foreign Language</i>	14	6	0
<i>Math (L1 & L2)</i>	26	7	0
<i>Science/CS&E</i>	48	16	2
<i>Social Studies</i>	23	11	0

In arts (“specials”) classes, there continues to be a higher percentage of classes over 25. This is due in part to the exploratory nature of our arts programming: nearly all students take part in art, drama, culinary arts, health, PE and some form of music. Band, Chorus and Orchestra are the only elective classes. Although some classes are larger than the ideal, particularly in arts classes, the projected drop in enrollment will relieve crowding in those classrooms within a short time frame. In addition, although reducing class sizes is an admirable goal, Thurston has space limitations that would that would prevent the scheduling of additional sections at times when those would be most helpful in mitigating class size concerns. Ultimately, given current enrollment projection data, it seems wise to continue investing in program development instead of adding staff to reduce class size. Any positions we were able to add related to class size would need to be cut within three years. With that said, the following positions are requested in FY’17:

1.0 FTE Computer Science/Engineering Teacher

Last fall, Thurston added a Computer Science and Engineering pilot course. This addition represents one effort to improve our students performance in science and to expand kids’ opportunities to learn thinking and practical skills that will serve them well in the future. While the course is going very well, the limited instructional time has been focused primarily on engineering. Further expansion of the program would allow more time to be dedicated to computer science.



0.25 FTE English Teacher

The Principal is currently teaching a section of 7th grade English. This budget request will restore the section back into the English department without adversely impacting class size.

WHAT ARE THE BUDGET PRIORITIES AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL?

1.0 FTE Instructional Assistant at Deerfield School

This is an existing position but was funded after the FY'16 budget was approved. The Instructional Assistant was added to mitigate high class sizes in the current Grades 3 and 4 (24 and 25 students/per class).



1.0 FTE Elementary Science Coordinator/Science Content Specialist

0.5 FTE Elementary Science Content Specialist

These positions would provide much needed leadership and expertise in science. While both our mathematics and English language arts programs have dedicated coordinators with content-area expertise, the district does not have this leadership in science. The coordinator would oversee the alignment of our elementary science curriculum with the new state curriculum frameworks, provide leadership in the development of high-quality science curriculum units, and provide coordination and instructional coaching around science instruction across all five elementary schools. In addition, with this staffing, students in grades 3, 4, and 5 would receive science instruction for 2-3 units per year by a teacher with an academic background and expertise in science.

Notably, the need for elementary science leadership has been part of the district's budget discussion for several years. The need for this staffing is now a significant priority.



WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE \$404,962 INCREASE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?

2.10 FTE New Personnel

The requested additions to the Student Services Department in the area of staffing total 2.10 FTE. This request is comprised of a 1.0 FTE special education teacher at WHS to meet the needs of students exiting grade 8 who require significant supports and substantially separate academic instruction. Additionally, in order to meet the needs of these rising students, 0.5 FTE of Speech Language Therapist (SLP)/Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) service will need to be added to the high school in total to meet all caseload requirements. Finally, 0.5 FTE is requested to be added to Deerfield elementary and .10 FTE to Hanlon elementary to increase the Resource Room teacher roles to 1.0 and 0.6, respectively. These increases were developed based on IEP requirements for service district-wide, input from Principals and staff. An additional driver is our ongoing commitment to educate the vast majority of our students in their home community and the commensurate requirement to provide appropriate services.



Out-of-District Tuition and Transportation

The out-of-district **tuition** budget increased by \$176,190 and the out-of-district **transportation** budget increased by \$32,772. These amounts are based on projected 2016-2017 student enrollment in day schools, residential schools, and collaboratives. A total of 22-24 Westwood students attend school via out-of-district placements.

Lesley Intern Program

The Westwood Public Schools/Lesley University Collaborative Internship program is again requested to be funded for the 2016-17 school year (Note that in past years the Lesley Interns have been funded with available balances in the district's Medicaid account). At this time, we have received inquiries from ten outside applicants and continue to offer this experience as a resource to existing employees. Next year will be the fifth year of hosting interns. WPS continues to benefit by training, hiring and developing future special education teachers who have proven to provide highly qualified support to our students during their training year. Some of the former interns have gone on to fill short and long term leave positions as well as be hired permanently by the District.



Why do Special Education Budgets fluctuate so much?: Special Education is, without a doubt, the most volatile of all school department budget items. The reason is that we are legally mandated to provide a certain level of service to students with special needs, as defined in the student's Individualized Education Plan, or "IEP". As it relates to budget requests, it is important to note that as students' needs change, the budget must also change. This interdependent relationship between a) mandated services, b) student needs, and c) school budgets means that forecasting Special Education expenses is a difficult, if not an impossible challenge for school administrators throughout the country.

WHAT ARE THE INCREASES TO NON-SALARY ACCOUNTS?

- **\$64,800 - Add one school bus to accommodate new students at University Station:** As anticipated, there are several families with school-aged children living at The Gables, the new residences at University Station. This year we were able to transport the low number of students by van, however that will not be sustainable as the numbers grow even marginally.
- **\$20,000 – Decrease Kindergarten Revolving fund offset:** The user fee for Full-Day Kindergarten is \$1,800/year. Those funds are deposited into a “revolving fund” (see definition below). Due to declining enrollment in Kindergarten, we have less revenue available to use as a budget offset.
- **\$28,800 – Increase School Bus Transportation:** FY’17 is Year 4 a five-year school bus transportation contract. This amount reflects the built-in contractual increase for FY’17.
- **\$33,000 – Increase shared Information Technology (IT) budget:** The Westwood Public Schools has a longstanding agreement with the Town to share IT services. The budget for the school’s portion of the costs have not been adjusted for several years, leaving it significantly underfunded. The proposed FY’17 budget reflects actual costs.
- **\$34,795 – Increase Athletics budget:** The proposed FY’17 budget is increased to reflect actual expenses in the Athletics department (contracted services, dues and memberships, etc.), as well as new coaching staff to accommodate increased participation in several sports.
- **\$129,050 - Increase to Fixture, Furniture & Equipment (FF&E), Technology, and Miscellaneous non-salary accounts:** The two major budget drivers in this category are as follows:
 - **\$80,000 - Expansion of 1:1 Chromebook program to Grade 7:** As anticipated, initial impressions of the 8th grade 1-1 Chromebook pilot have been favorable. Teachers have reported several benefits including quick access to resources, improved organizational, efficiency, spontaneity, and an increase in personalization and student centered-learning experiences. Additionally, the adoption of Google Classroom, an online platform where teachers can host their classes, has been an excellent compliment to the 1-1 program, particularly in the way it has streamlined teacher-to-student and student-to-student communication. The proposed expansion of our 1-1 program to grade 7 during the 2016 - 2017 school year is a logical consequence of the 8th grade pilot this year. Not only will this enable 7th grade staff and students to realize some of the benefits seen in 8th grade, it will also help to build capacity for the eventual transition to a fully online MCAS 2.0, slated for full rollout in the Spring of 2019.
 - **\$20,000 - Thurston Middle School Student Furniture:** Last year we launched a multi-year replacement plan for student desks and chairs at Thurston. This budget allows for continuation of the plan.



A “revolving fund,” is an fund established to dedicate a specific source of revenue from fees and charges to pay expenses in rendering the service for which those payments are made (MA Department of Revenue).

DOES THIS BUDGET CUT ANY PROGRAMS OR SERVICES?

No, we are fortunate to have avoided any cuts to programs or services. This is something we should not take for granted, as many districts (even high-performing districts) continue to experience budget difficulties.

IS THIS THE FINAL FY'17 BUDGET?

WHAT COULD CHANGE?

Hopefully this is the final budget, and I will strongly urge the School Committee to adopt my recommendations. However, the presentation of the Superintendent's Recommended Budget is only the first step in the budget process. Over the next few months, the School Committee will review the budget and deliberate. It always reserves the right to make changes, modifications, additions, etc. Also, the School Committee does not work in isolation. During the budget process, it will work collaboratively with the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Commission to see how the School Department's request fits into the overall Town budget.

As always, I will strongly encourage the School Committee to delay a final vote on the budget until we have the most up-to-date and reliable information.

