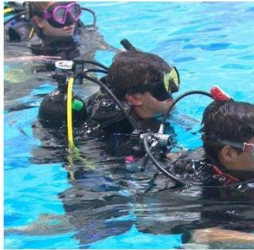


# WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## PROPOSED FY'21 OPERATING BUDGET EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### DEVELOPED BY

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AND THE ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, AND STAFF  
OF THE WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future*

January 24, 2020

Dear Westwood School Committee and Westwood Residents,

I am pleased to present to you an Executive Summary of the *FY'21 Superintendent's Recommended Budget*. This document provides an overview of the budget and insight into how budget decisions are made. In addition to this summary, all of our detailed budget documents and spreadsheets are available to the public on the district website. We provide this information so that our community can be confident that our budget ensures a high-quality educational experience for students, while also maintaining a sense of financial responsibility and stewardship for the town's resources.

It is an exciting time in the Westwood Public Schools. As I visit classrooms across the district, I see students engaged in meaningful work that supports our vision of graduates who are skilled, confident, curious, and kind; excited for their futures and ready to contribute to their communities. We are proud that in 2019, four of our elementary schools received commendations from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Westwood High School was ranked #13 on *U.S. News and World Report's* list of the best high schools in Massachusetts, and the Downey Elementary School was named a 2019 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

The quality of the Westwood Public Schools is directly related to the value the community places on its children's educational opportunities and to the investment that its residents make in its schools. Right now, a major focus of this investment is Westwood's collaboration with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to address some significant capital needs through a school building project. The District values the input we have received from the community during this fall's visioning process and is committed to keeping residents informed and engaged throughout the entire Feasibility Study process. With the community's input, at the conclusion of this school year, the School Building Committee will identify which option to move forward to the next phase of the project, leading to a Town Meeting and ballot vote in Spring 2021 for project funding.

With the school building project on the horizon, when developing this budget, we were especially mindful to keep any increase to the School Department operating budget at a reasonable and sustainable level. The budget request for FY'21 represents a 3.6% increase over FY'20. I am confident that this increase will allow us to continue to provide the high level of service that the community expects, while continuing to move forward with strategic priorities that respond to changing student needs and enhance students' opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this budget or any other school related matter. I can be reached by email at [eparks@westwood.k12.ma.us](mailto:eparks@westwood.k12.ma.us) or by phone at 781-326-7500 x1341. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Emily J. Parks  
Superintendent of Schools

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## WHAT IS THE FY'21 SCHOOL DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST?

As the table below illustrates, our recommended budget for FY'21 totals \$48,187,500, which represents a 3.6% increase over FY'20.

FY'20 Final Budget <sup>1</sup>	\$46,513,031
Proposed FY'21 Budget	\$48,187,500
Increase (\$)	\$1,674,469
Increase (%)	3.6%

The FY'21 proposed budget increase is consistent with the last three years of relatively modest budget requests and builds upon the strong foundation created by the larger budget increases in FY'16 and FY'17 made possible by the new growth revenue from the University Station development:

WPS Operating Budget Increases					
FY'16	FY'17	FY'18	FY'19	FY'20	Proposed FY'21
5.4%	6.0%	3.3%	3.4%	3.5%	3.6%

Additionally, FY'20 Chapter 70 education state aid was not finalized until after last year's Annual Town Meeting. Incorporating the FY'20 Chapter 70 increase into the School Department allocation will also require a vote at Town Meeting.

Incorporate FY'20 Chapter 70 aid <sup>2</sup>	\$160,182
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<sup>1</sup> At the Annual Town Meeting in 2019, the town approved \$50,000 for transportation from the University Station area. This increased the FY'20 budget from \$46,463,031 to \$46,513,031.

<sup>2</sup> This funding will be applied to SPED tuition, and costs associated with the elimination of the cell tower lease and reduction of Kindergarten tuition.

## WHAT ARE THE MAJOR BUDGET CATEGORIES?

The following table<sup>3</sup> breaks down the total budget into five categories. As is evident, in school budgets, **salaries** are by far the greatest budget driver. In the proposed FY'21 budget, salaries account for 87% of the overall budget and correspondingly comprise most of the proposed budget increase. This budget proposes a strategic investment in Professional Positions and Support Staff, including several positions in Special Education. These changes in positions are reflected in the 4.5% salary increase. While it appears that there is a reduction in Special Education funding, this represents a movement of funds from **non-salary to salary** lines rather than a cut to services or funding.

Major Budget Category	FY'20 Budget	Proposed FY'21 Budget	Incremental Change (\$)	Incremental Change (%)
Total Salaries	\$40,275,301	\$42,089,531	1,814,230	4.5%
Non-Salary				
Special Education	\$1,186,627	\$1,058,367	(\$128,260)	(10.8%)
Utilities	\$1,181,000	\$1,207,000	\$26,000	2.2%
Operations and Maintenance	\$993,335	\$993,335	\$0	0%
All other non-salary	\$2,876,768	\$2,839,267	(\$37,501)	(1.3%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$46,513,031</b>	<b>\$48,187,500</b>	<b>\$1,674,469</b>	<b>3.6%</b>



<sup>3</sup> The table above represents town funds, exclusive of revolving funds or grants.

## HOW DOES THE PROPOSED BUDGET SUPPORT THE DISTRICT'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES?

The Westwood Public Schools is committed to providing a wonderful educational experience for all of the students we serve. When developing the budget, we work to ensure that the district's resources closely align with our priorities and values. Though the WPS is a large organization with many moving parts, we know that students' daily experience is most powerfully influenced by the quality and skill of the teachers they work with in the classroom. The WPS budget, like all school districts, is primarily about people. With over 600 employees, salaries comprise 87% of our annual operating budget. Therefore, when developing the FY'21 budget, we first consider our contractual salary obligations and the staffing levels that will be required to maintain favorable class sizes for our students. Meeting those obligations, and accounting for other known costs such as transportation, is often described as "maintaining level services." Much of the proposed FY'21 budget increase represents our analysis of what it will take to continue to provide the same experiences and opportunities for students next year that are available to students today.

In addition, to preserve the things that we value, we also continue to work on our district improvement goals and adapt as our students' needs and the educational landscape change. Our success in Westwood is partly attributable to our commitment to continuous improvement. For this reason, the proposed budget continues to advocate for robust line items related to curriculum, instruction, and professional development. Though the proposed budget includes very little increase in the Curriculum and Instruction cost centers, within the existing level of funding we have made strategic decisions about how

**"Though the proposed budget includes very little increase in the Curriculum and Instruction cost centers, within the existing level of funding we have made strategic decisions about how to allocate the funds in FY'21 in order to meet student needs and work toward our goals."**

to allocate the funds in FY'21 in order to meet student needs and work toward our goals. For example, in FY'21, curriculum alignment funding will be focused on implementing the recommendations from the Social Emotional Learning and English Language Arts reviews. Meanwhile, the instructional supply funds and Fixtures, Furniture & Equipment (FF&E) allocations will allow continued investment in Science/Technology and Engineering at the middle and high school and coding at the elementary level.



## WHAT ARE THE CHANGES TO THE BUDGET - FY'20 TO FY'21?

The following chart outlines the progression from the FY'20 Budget to the FY'21 Recommended Budget. It shows "how the budget is built."

Budget Request			FTE Change	FY'21 Proposed Budget Components
<b>FY'20 Budget</b>				\$46,513,031
<b>Increase salaries for existing personnel (contractual)</b>				\$1,417,691
<b>Faculty/Professional Positions</b>			2.4 FTE	\$78,000
TMS: Add .5 FTE ELA Instructional Specialist	.5 FTE	\$38,000		
District: .4 FTE Director of Safety and Security	.4 FTE	\$40,000		
District: Reallocate 1.5 FTE SLP/OT/PT and Reading Specialist from Contracted Services to salaries	1.5 FTE	\$0		
<b>Support Staff Positions</b>			4.0 FTE	\$118,000
Preschool: Add instructional assistant	1.0 FTE	\$26,000		
Elementary: Add ABA tutor	1.0 FTE	\$40,000		
WHS: Add instructional assistants	2.0 FTE	\$52,000		
<b>Net increase to various non-salary accounts</b>				\$60,778
<b>Total Change</b>			<b>6.4 FTE</b>	<b>\$1,674,469</b>
<b>FY'21 Superintendent's Recommended Budget</b>				<b>\$48,187,500</b>

In addition to the net increase of 6.4 FTE staff in the FY'21 budget, some positions<sup>4</sup> were added this year in order to address issues that emerged after the budget process. These positions were added within the FY'20 budget allocation (from the net savings realized through the hiring process and retirements) and are included in the level services calculation.

<sup>4</sup> These positions include 1.0 FTE elementary teacher, 1.0 FTE instructional assistant, and 1.5 FTE guidance counselors.

## WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED STAFFING CHANGES RELATED TO ENROLLMENT?

### ***FY'21 Enrollment***

In FY'21, we are proposing no changes in general education staffing levels related to enrollment and class sizes. Current staffing levels are adequate in general education to meet instructional needs.

We anticipate very little change in the number of students enrolled at the high school and middle school in FY'21. Having added several positions at the secondary level during a period of growing enrollment, the current staffing level meets the needs of the high school master schedule and is sufficient to maintain reasonable class sizes and the team structure at the middle school.

**FY'21 Anticipated Enrollment by Level**

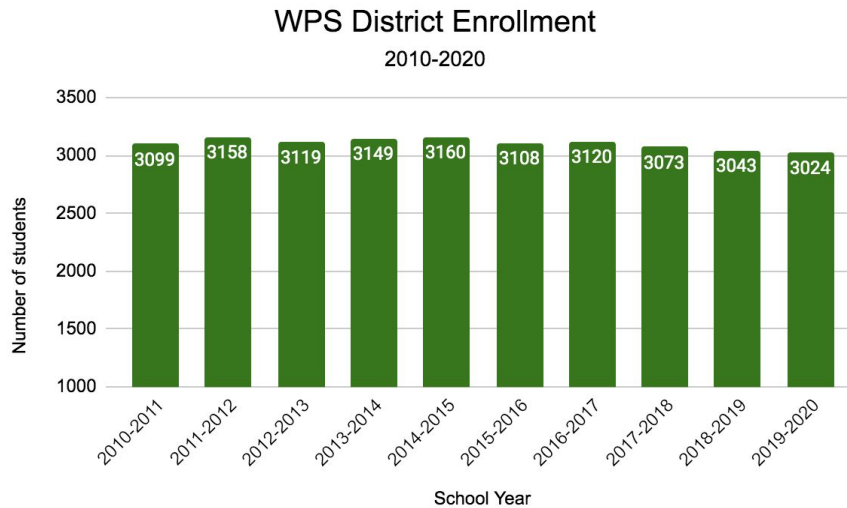
<b>Level</b>	<b>FY'20</b>	<b>FY'21</b>
Preschool	45	45
Elementary	1266	1241
Middle School	706	693
High School	1007	1021
<b>District Total</b>	<b>3024</b>	<b>3000</b>

Similarly, we do not anticipate a significant change in the total elementary enrollment across the district in FY'21. However, we know from past experience that due to the relatively small size of each of our elementary schools, the number of staff needed to maintain class sizes at the elementary is more variable than at the secondary level. The addition or reduction of just a few students at a grade level in a particular school can change the number of class sections required to keep class sizes aligned with the School Committee's class size guidelines. In particular, it is difficult to project incoming kindergarten enrollment by school. We are proposing maintaining elementary staffing at current levels and making decisions about how to allocate staff after the kindergarten enrollment process is complete.

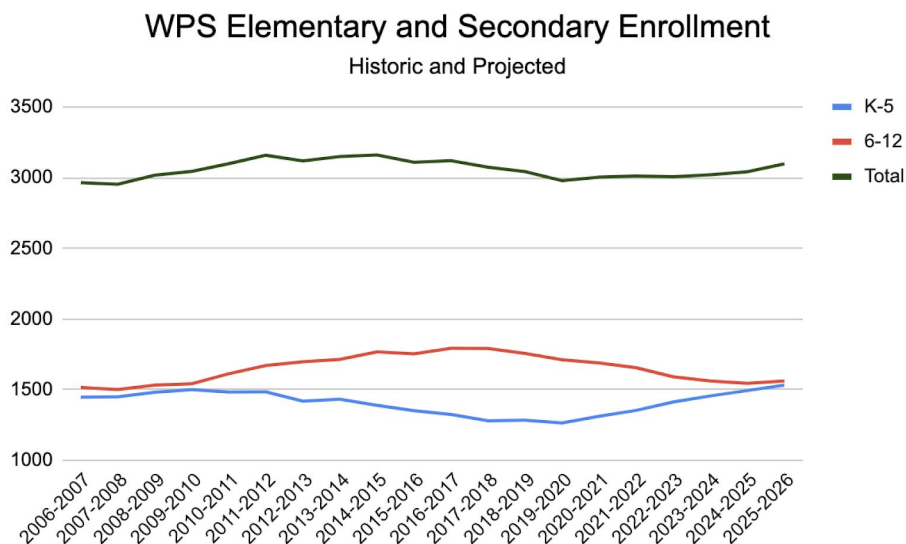


## Enrollment Trends

During the budget process we look at enrollment trends and make predictions not only for next year's budget, but for the next several years. A 10-year look back reveals some small fluctuations in district enrollment numbers:



As shown above, ten years ago, during the 2010-2011 school year, 3,099 students were enrolled in the Westwood Public Schools. Today, the district serves 3,024 students. Though the overall district enrollment has remained fairly stable, over the last ten years we have experienced a shift in how students were distributed across grades with declining elementary enrollment and an enrollment bubble at the secondary level. Current enrollment projections suggest that the district is about to experience another shift. Over the next 10 years, we will begin to experience enrollment growth at the elementary level and a decline in secondary enrollment:



As illustrated above, this enrollment pattern is in keeping with cycles that we have experienced in the past. These projections are important to consider as we make decisions about current staffing levels, plan for future operating budgets, and make choices related to the building project.

## WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED STAFFING CHANGES RELATED TO PROGRAM NEEDS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES?

The FY'20 budget allowed us to make significant investments in our strategic priorities. We secured funding for several staff positions, creating a strong foundation for the future. For example, the addition in FY'20 of an Elementary Social Studies Coordinator and a Middle School English Language Arts/Social

The FY'20 budget provided a strong foundation for the FY'21 budget by including positions that support our strategic goals and changing student needs. In FY'20, positions included:

- Elementary Social Studies Coordinator
- Middle School ELA/Social Studies Department Head
- Guidance Counselors (WHS and TMS)
- PreK-8 Social Emotional Learning Coordinator

Studies Department Head provides critical support and leadership for our strategic priorities related to coherent, connected curriculum; and is enabling us to respond effectively to changing expectations for social studies and civics education. Similarly, by adding guidance counselors at both WHS and TMS and creating a new PreK-8 Social Emotional Learning Coordinator position, we are better able to meet the emotional and mental health needs of all of our students in support of our goal of a healthy and supportive school community.

In FY'21, we are proposing two new positions related to our strategic priorities:

### **Add .5 FTE Middle School English Language Arts (ELA) Specialist: \$38,000**

As students enter middle school, the instructional emphasis shifts dramatically from “learning to read” to “reading to learn,” and a student’s skill as a reader becomes a significant factor in their performance across all content areas. For the past 18 months, the middle school leadership team has piloted a structured reading intervention program in grade 6 to improve identified students’ comprehension skills. As of the publication of this summary, the majority of students enrolled in the pilot have made demonstrable progress, including improved MCAS scores. Additional staffing is needed in order to expand the pilot program and meet the needs of more students.

### **Add .4 FTE Director of Safety and Security: \$40,000**

This position will oversee the continual review of the District’s safety and security protocol, including annual training for students, teachers, and incident management teams. In collaboration with the Director of Operations, this individual will ensure that the recommendations of the recently completed security audit are implemented. Finally, this position will serve as a liaison between the School Department and Public Safety.



## WHAT ARE THE STAFFING CHANGES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?

The Westwood Public Schools is committed to meeting the needs of all of our learners in an inclusive setting. As a public school, we are legally mandated to provide a certain level of service to students with special needs, as defined in a student's Individualized Education Plan or "IEP." When students' needs change, the budget also changes. This interdependent relationship between a) legally mandated services, b) student needs, and c) school budgets means that forecasting special education expenses presents a particular challenge for school administrators. As a result, special education is the most variable of all school department budget items. We analyze student needs both as part of the budget process, and also on an on-going basis throughout the school year.

Over the last decade, the District has created several district-wide programs for students with special education needs. These programs enable us to educate almost all of our students in-district. In FY'20, less than 1% of our student population (20-22 students) attended school in out-of-district, tuition-based special education placements. This ability to educate almost all of our students in-district aligns with our desire to have students attend school in their community. It is also the most cost-effective strategy for educating students when their needs can be met in-district.

When budgeting for FY'21, we have thought carefully about several special education trends:

- An increased number of preschool aged students with significant, often complex, special education needs
- An increased need for therapeutic programming, particularly for elementary-aged students with emotional and behavioral challenges
- An increased number of students in the transition program for students age 18-22
- An increased need to respond to students experiencing acute mental health issues who require short-term out-of-district placements

We are proposing the following staff to enable us to expand our in-district special education programming to adapt to these changing student needs:

**Add 1.0 FTE Elementary Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Tutor: \$40,000**

This position, in conjunction with a reallocated special education teaching position and two reallocated instructional assistants, will increase our in-district supports for elementary-aged students with emotional and behavioral challenges by expanding the STAR program.

**Add 1.0 FTE Preschool Instructional Assistant (IA): \$26,000**

This position will provide identified services on students' IEPs at the Integrated Preschool to support an increased number of preschool aged students with significant special education needs.

**Add 2.0 FTE High School Instructional Assistants (IA): \$52,000**

One instructional assistant position will support an increased cohort of students in the FLEX Program at the high school who require therapeutic programming and support with emotional and behavioral challenges. The second IA position will support the transition program for students age 18-22 at their job sites and community college placements.

**Reallocate 1.5 FTE SLP/OT/PT and Reading Specialist from Contracted Services to salaries: \$0**

Some specialized services are currently provided to students through contracted services rather than by district employees. The use of contracted services sometimes makes sense when the service is short-term or the number of hours provided does not warrant hiring a district employee. However, based on an analysis of student Individualized Education Plans, we believe that it would be more cost effective to bring 1.5 FTE of Speech-Language Pathologist/Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapist and Reading services in-house next year. This change will increase the district FTE and change where the cost of the service is charged within the budget. Since the rate for contracted services through an agency is often higher than a district salary, this transfer will allow us to do more with the same dollars.

**WHAT ARE THE NON-SALARY CHANGES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?**

In addition to staffing above, in the proposed FY'21 budget, we have budgeted for tuition and transportation for known special education students, including contractual transportation increases and a 3% escalation for tuitions:

	<b>FY'20</b>	<b>FY'21</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Residential Tuition</b>	\$239,263	\$246,440	\$7,177
<b>Day Tuition</b>	\$562,795	\$579,678	\$16,883
<b>Collaborative Tuition</b>	\$507,814	\$523,754	\$15,940
<b>Out-of-District SPED Transportation</b>	\$404,194	\$408,194	\$4,000
<b>In-District SPED Transportation</b>	\$315,733	\$318,733	\$3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,029,799</b>	<b>\$2,076,799</b>	<b>\$47,000</b>

It is likely, though not certain, that there will be additional students in FY'21 who require out-of-district placements. Given the uncertainty, we are proposing that the town provide additional funding (\$350,000) for the special education reserve account, rather than increase the district's operating budget. Doing so will allow the district to respond to changing needs should that be required without unnecessarily escalating the operating budget. The amount of reserve funding requested reflects tuition costs associated with one unforeseen residential placement and one moderately priced day placement.

Finally, as noted above, we are proposing to move funds from contracted services to salary. This reallocation has no impact on the overall budget amount; rather it allows us to provide more service with the same dollars in an area that has historically been over budget.



## WHAT ARE THE NON-SALARY BUDGET CHANGES IN GENERAL EDUCATION?

### **Increase in Instructional Supplies and Consultants: \$31,000**

Several factors have influenced the need to expand our instructional supply budget. Since the transition to a hands-on elementary science curriculum, the bulk of the existing funds have been used for consumable materials and to support our online subscription to STEMScopes. With the adoption of the Calkin Units of Study curriculum for elementary English language arts, there will be a need to expand and replace classroom library texts each year. Finally, the recent Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum review and entry findings of the SEL coordinator point to the need for a SEL screening tool as well as training and materials to help teachers create appropriate calming spaces in their classrooms. In addition, this FY'21 budget proposes an increase to a consulting line that is used for professional development and items such as a scheduling consultant for the Middle School.

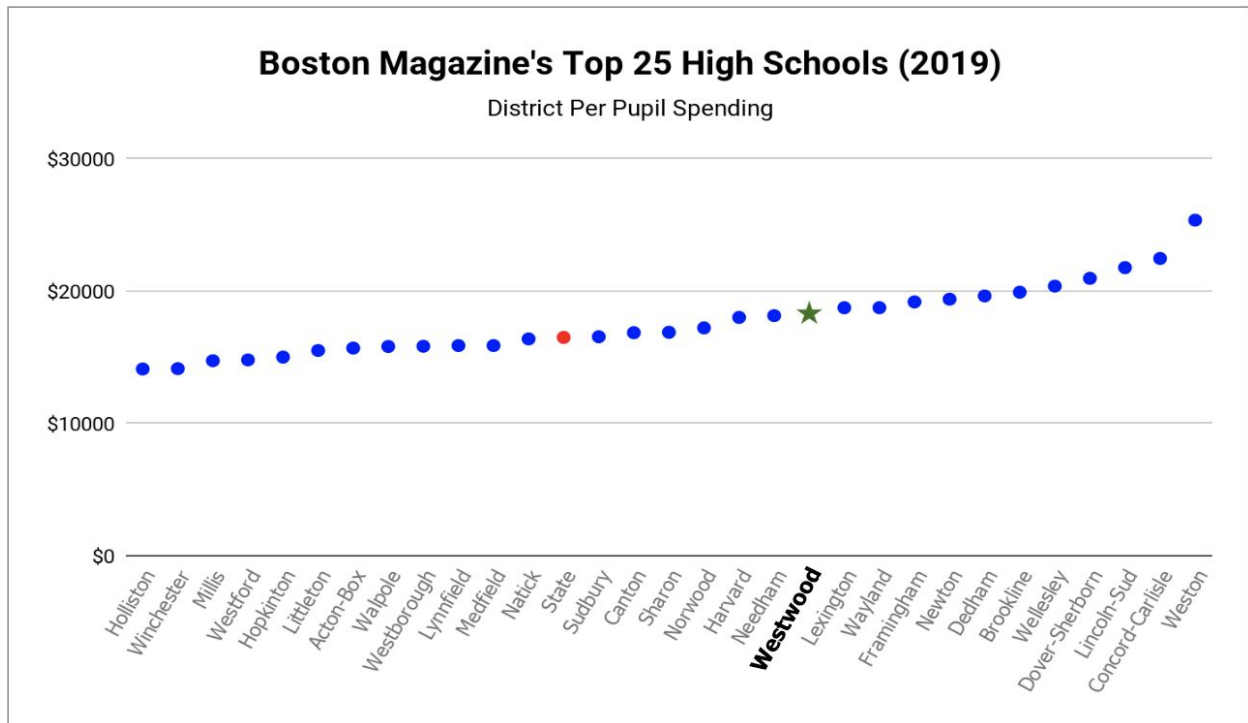
### **Increase in Regular Transportation: \$22,500**

This funding addresses cost increases contained in our bus company contract.



## HOW DOES WESTWOOD'S PER PUPIL SPENDING COMPARE TO OTHER DISTRICTS?

The chart below compares the per pupil spending in Westwood to spending in the districts that appear on *Boston* magazine's "top 25" high schools list for 2019. The data presented is from the MA Department of Education website and reflects FY'18 spending, the most recent data that is available.



As illustrated above:

- The state-average per pupil expenditure is \$16,507.
- The average per pupil expenditure for districts on this list is \$18,112.
- The median per pupil expenditure for the districts on this list is \$18,230.

Westwood's per pupil expenditure of \$18,310 is generally on par, or below, other high-performing districts and suggests that Westwood continues to provide a good value for its investment.

## WHAT IS MISSING FROM THE BUDGET? ARE THERE UNFUNDED NEEDS?

Every year, cost center leaders submit both short-term and long-term budget requests. The district leadership team (central office administrators, principals, and assistant principals) meets to review and discuss all of the requests and to reach consensus about the upcoming year's priorities, PreK-12, based on district goals and initiatives. This FY'21 proposed budget, reflecting a 3.6% increase, represents a reasonable and sustainable budget for Westwood residents. However, it's important to understand that this budget was developed by identifying priorities, making choices, and deferring some items for future budget discussions. Some of those deferred items include:

- Additional literacy support at the middle school
- Special education staffing to increase the capacity of the PEER Program
- An increase to the special education contracted services allocation
- Increase English Language Learner (ELL) staffing to respond to increased regulatory demands
- More instructional assistants at all levels
- An additional elementary science specialist

## IS THIS THE FINAL FY'21 BUDGET? WHAT COULD CHANGE?

The presentation of the Superintendent's Recommended Budget is only the first step in the budget process. The School Committee will review the budget, hold a public budget hearing, and deliberate. Through that process, the School Committee could make changes, modifications, or additions. In addition, during the budget process, the School Department will work collaboratively with the Select Board and the Finance Commission to see how the School Department's request fits into the overall Town budget.

*Thank you for your continued support of the Westwood Public Schools!*

