

Berlin-Boylston Regional School District



FY2023 Preliminary Budget Presentation

December 14, 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Superintendent's Message

The Berlin-Boylston Regional School District is fully committed to its mission of supporting and challenging all students to achieve personal and academic excellence in a student-centered environment. In order to do so, we believe, as district leaders, that it is imperative to hire and retain qualified professional personnel within our schools in order to best ensure the well-being of our students.

During the past eighteen months, we have identified the specific needs within our district in the areas of academics, social emotional learning, mental health and preparation for college and career readiness. These needs have come as both the direct and indirect results of COVID-19 as well as the changing landscape of education in the ever-shifting world in which we live. We must continuously determine what is best for our students both in the present and for the future.

In several cases, our District Improvement Plan, now in its fourth of a five-year lifespan, has faced obstacles that have forced us to change direction or adjust completion timelines. Therefore, it is our intention to begin working on an updated District Improvement Plan in March 2022 that will include carryovers from our current Plan, and more importantly, relevant new initiatives that address the needs of our students, staff and families through a more current lens.

The proposed 2022-2023 school district budget, in part, reflects the identified priorities and so we begin this new phase by turning toward an emphasis on investing in people over programs for the coming year and beyond.

We strongly urge the Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committee, the Boards of Selectmen, the Finance Committees and the townspeople to support our budget on behalf of the children that we serve and their comprehensive well-being. In doing so, we can ensure that our schools and our district will provide them with the education they deserve and the ability to navigate the world in strength of mind, body, and spirit.

Respectfully,
Jeffrey T. Zanghi
Superintendent of Schools

FY23 Budget Tracker - Working Copy
PRELIM BUDGET 12-14-21

Drivers of Year over Year Changes	Berlin Memorial		Boylston Elementary		Tahanto MS-HS		Total	
FY22 Approved Budget	\$ 3,958,496		\$ 4,325,652		\$ 9,646,221		\$ 17,930,369	
Special Education OOD Tuitions + Transportation	\$ 188,960	4.8%	\$ 127,831	3.0%	\$ 373,232	3.9%	\$ 690,023	3.8%
SPED Paraprofessionals	\$ 3,535	0.1%	\$ 72,992	1.7%	\$ 37,239	0.4%	\$ 113,766	0.6%
SPED Contract Services	\$ (6,995)	-0.2%	\$ 20,887	0.5%	\$ 2,835	0.0%	\$ 16,727	0.1%
Teacher's Union salaries - contractual increases	\$ 71,361	1.8%	\$ 76,006	1.8%	\$ 89,247	0.9%	\$ 236,614	1.3%
Health Care Plan Benefits	\$ 5,966	0.2%	\$ 79,296	1.8%	\$ 87,508	0.9%	\$ 172,770	1.0%
OPEB Contribution	\$ 618	0.0%	\$ (6,050)	-0.1%	\$ (65,901)	-0.7%	\$ (71,333)	-0.4%
SPED Reserve Contribution	\$ (25,000)	-0.6%	\$ (25,000)	-0.6%	\$ -	0.0%	\$ (50,000)	-0.3%
Math Coach / Tutor Model (shared Coach)	\$ (19,729)	-0.5%	\$ 48,330	1.1%	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 28,601	0.2%
Technology / Telecomm service contracts	\$ 3,600	0.1%	\$ 6,890	0.2%	\$ 26,940	0.3%	\$ 37,430	0.2%
All other	\$ 29,141	0.7%	\$ 28,893	0.7%	\$ 67,871	0.7%	\$ 125,905	0.7%
Total increase	\$ 251,457	6.4%	\$ 430,075	9.9%	\$ 618,971	6.4%	\$ 1,300,503	7.3%
FY23 Budget - Level Service	\$ 4,209,953		\$ 4,755,727		\$ 10,265,192		\$ 19,230,872	
% increase - Level Service		6.4%		9.9%		6.4%		7.3%

Above Level Service Requests	BMS		BES		TAH		Total	
Classroom Teacher (68K + benefits)			\$ 88,458	2.0%			\$ 88,458	0.5%
Kindergarten aides (2 @ 0.45 FTE ea)			\$ 23,400	0.5%			\$ 23,400	0.1%
Increase Speech-Lang. Path. From 0.8 to 1.0 FTE			\$ 17,616	0.4%			\$ 17,616	0.1%
Floating Nurse (\$70K + benefits)	\$ 22,549	0.6%	\$ 22,549	0.5%	\$ 45,800	0.5%	\$ 90,898	0.5%
Add 1.0 FTE Special Ed. Teacher (incl benes)			\$ 88,458	2.0%			\$ 88,458	0.5%
Curriculum Assistant (\$48K + benefits, less PT role)	\$ 14,049	0.4%	\$ 14,049	0.3%	\$ 22,098	0.2%	\$ 50,196	0.3%
Elementary grade Literacy/ELA Coach (shared)	\$ 52,720	1.3%	\$ 52,720	1.2%			\$ 105,441	0.6%
Class Link - Single Sign on Software	\$ 2,000	0.1%	\$ 2,000	0.0%	\$ 2,000	0.0%	\$ 6,000	0.0%
BES Pre-school Teacher and staffing, net of revenue			\$ 88,458	2.0%			\$ 88,458	0.5%
Reduce usage of school choice	\$ 1,540	0.0%	\$ 40,000	0.9%	\$ 75,000	0.8%	\$ 115,000	0.6%
Musical Instrument purchase/repairs			\$ 2,000	0.0%	\$ 8,945	0.1%	\$ 12,485	0.1%
Tahanto counseling dept. - 1.0 FTE					\$ 88,458	0.9%	\$ 88,458	0.5%
Tahanto STEM Teacher (and AD role moves to FT)					\$ 105,441	1.1%	\$ 105,441	0.6%
Total ABOVE LEVEL SVC Requests	\$ 92,858	2.3%	\$ 439,707	10.2%	\$ 347,741	3.6%	\$ 880,307	4.9%
FY23 Budget w/ Above Level Svc Items	\$ 4,302,811		\$ 5,195,434		\$ 10,612,933		\$ 20,111,179	
\$ increase	\$ 344,315		\$ 869,782		\$ 966,712		\$ 2,180,810	
% increase		8.7%		20.1%		10.0%		12.2%

FY23 Level Service Budget

“Level Service” definition

A level service budget maintains continuity of programming and staff and the budget includes those resources that were budgeted the prior year. In addition, a level service budget reflects the contractual obligations of the district, both with staff, and vendors, and factors in increases in those areas consistent with contractual agreements. It also may include some additional costs to meet federal mandates, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). For example, supports, services, and programs for special education students, consistent with their IEP.

FY23 Level Service Budget Narrative

The FY23 level service budget increased by \$1,300,503 (7.3%) vs. the prior year FY22 budget. This is higher than in a typical year, due to a variety of factors. The primary drivers of this increase are outlined below.

Special education costs account for \$820,516 of this increase, or 4.6% of the overall 7.3% increase. Out of district tuitions, and transportation for students attending these placements increased due to move-ins and new students in the district, resulting in four new OOD placements added to the FY23 budget. Costs of placements are substantial, and can range from \$60,000 to over \$300,000 per year. At the same time, a larger number of students in-district are requiring intensive supports. Three additional paraprofessionals are needed at Boylston Elementary, and two additional paraprofessionals at Tahanto, to provide the 1:1 support for these students, as outlined in their IEPs. Most of these have been already hired, and are being substantially funded by carryover grant funds from FY21, however, these grants are being spent down in FY22.

Contractual teachers for teacher’s salaries account for \$236,614 of the increase, or 1.3% of the overall increase. This includes all positions outlined in the teacher’s union contract, such as nurse, school psychologist, special positions, counselor roles, not just teacher’s salaries. This increase also factors in replacement hire cost differential that was realized via a number of retirements in the past year.

Health care increases account for \$172,770 of the increase, though it is important to note that last year’s budget only included 11 months of health care expenses, due to the one-month premium “holiday” provided by the district’s insurer, MIIA. These savings were applied last year to make one-time increases in the FY22 budget to the district’s OPEB contribution and the district’s SPED Reserve contributions. The FY23 level service budget reflects a reduction to those reserve fund contributions.

The Math Coach role was converted in FY22 from a Math Specialist at Berlin Memorial School only, to a district wide role providing coaching to teacher’s in both elementary schools on math instructional practices. The Math Coach is supported by tutors in both schools, who provide direct service to students. This was presented and approved in FY22, after the FY22 budget was finalized, and in FY23, it is being reflected in the budget for the first time. It re-distributes the costs across both schools, with an increase overall due to tutor costs, and also due to a reduction in grant funding applied to offset the cost of this position.

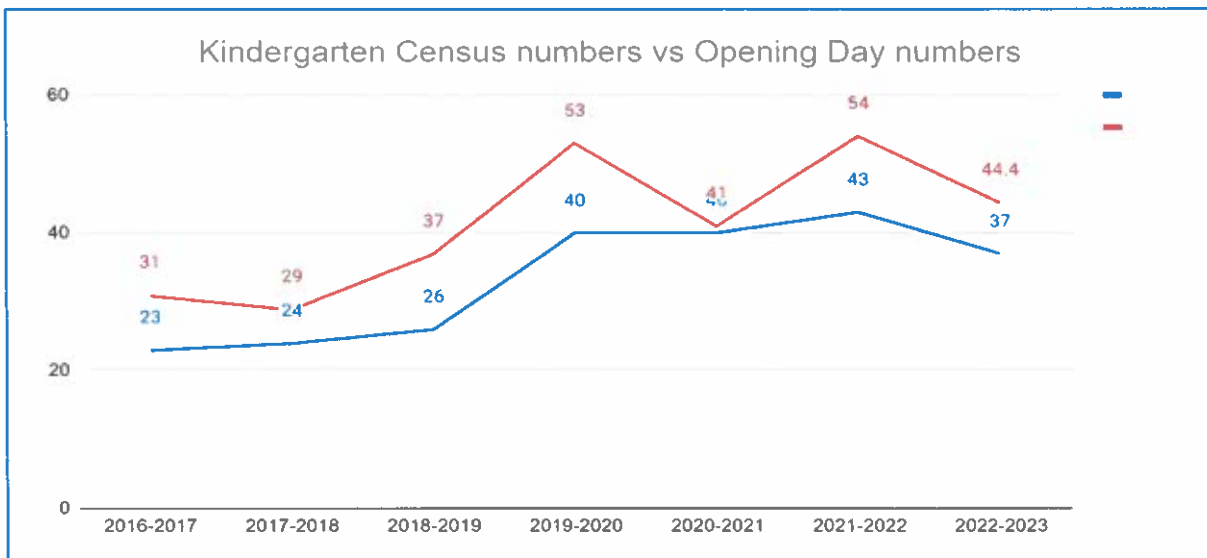
Finally, there are some technology cost increases (\$37,430) for services that were added to address needs at the beginning of the pandemic, such as Blocksi, a web filtering service for computers and chromebooks when they are taken home by students, and ZOOM, a webinar / meeting platform. The district was able to utilize grant funding for these programs last year, but those grants have expired. In addition, a telecom support contract was added at Tahanto to help solve ongoing issues with phone service at the school.

Above Level Service Requests – FY23 Budget

1. Classroom teacher (Boylston Elementary)

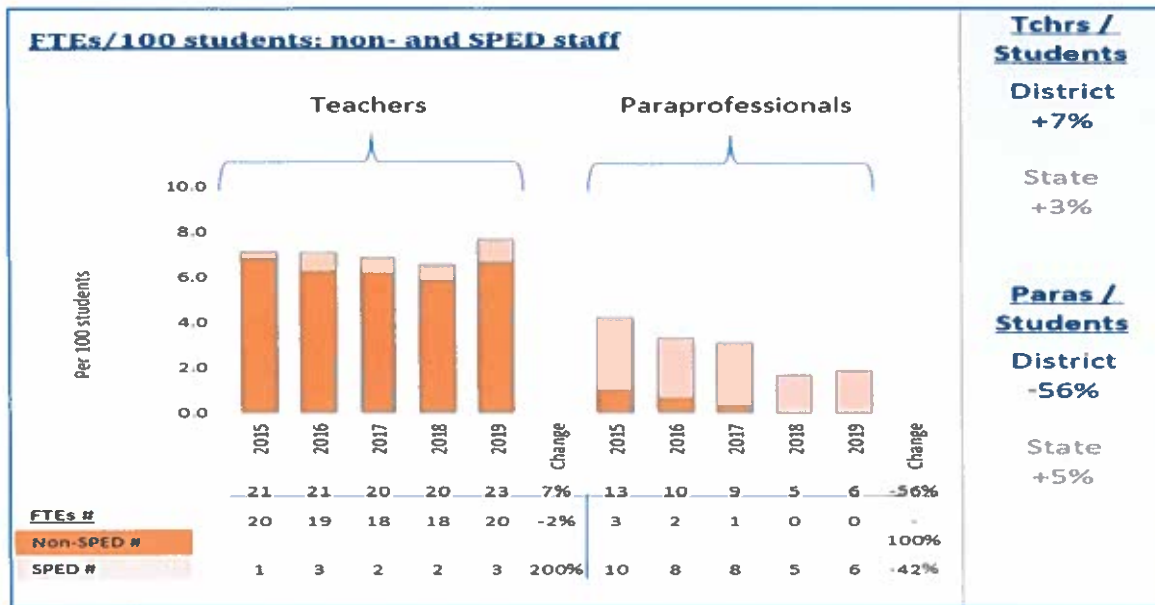
BES has been trending towards three classes per grade for several years. This year we find ourselves graduating a class of two (5th grade classrooms) while anticipating consistent Kindergarten enrollment (of 3 classrooms). The census currently has next year's incoming grade K enrollment at 37 students. We are aware of 6 additional students who "red shirted" this year, adding to that total. As you can see in the graph below, our opening day K enrollment in non-covid years fluctuates between 20-40% above the census. This all leads me to believe we will once again need three kindergarten classes.

Without this additional teacher, it would require either combining a class in another grade and increasing class sizes or create a new teaching position. The only grades that consolidation could be considered is 4th to 5th grade (currently at 54 students) or 1st to 2nd (currently at 41 students). I hesitate to consolidate with the unknown of move-ins. These classes do offer opportunities for additional school choice next year.



2. Two 0.45 FTE Kindergarten Paraprofessionals (Boylston Elementary)

As these class sizes have grown, the needs from before the pandemic have also grown. It could be easily argued (and it has been) that these supports were necessary prior to COVID. However, since the pandemic, and the ensuing lack of structured interactions for these students before entering Kindergarten, students have required even more attention and support in general school readiness. The addition of 2 0.45 classroom paras would offer 3 hours of support in each classroom. Note in the chart below that in the last 5 years, we have completely eliminated our "non-special education" paraprofessionals per 100 students while our K classes have grown in size.



3. Speech-Language Pathologist – increase 0.2 FTE (Boylston Elementary)

This year this position was increased from 0.8 FTE full time to support the growing case load numbers. This position also is fulfilling part of the district’s requirement under ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) to provide equitable services to non-public school students residing in our district (home-schooled, or attending private schools). The workload for this position is expected to maintain or increase, and therefore it is requested and recommended that this be budgeted as a full-time position moving forward. The same position at Berlin Memorial School is budgeted as a full time FTE.

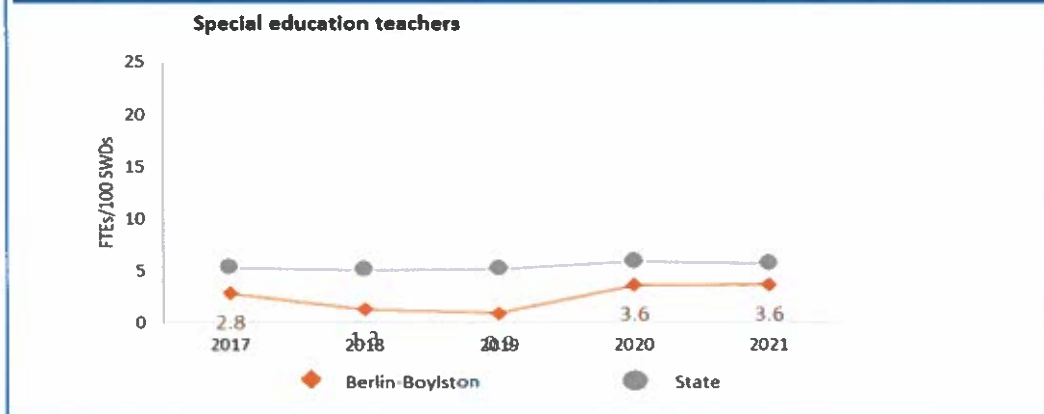
4. Floating Nurse (district wide)

With the added challenges of contact tracing, testing and a global pandemic, there has been an increased need for nursing support in the district, both day to day help and to cover when Substitute nurses aren’t available in the district. Please see attached letter from the Nurses. (separate attachment)

5. Additional Special Education Teacher (Boylston Elementary School)

This is intended to address higher than normal level caseloads at the school. The case loads in our district are higher than the average caseload across the state. See the first chart below, which shows the lower number of special education teachers per 100 students with disabilities. Within the district, there are also disparities in caseloads , with BES having the highest case load levels amongst our three schools. This directly impacts the level of support identified students at BES receive.

2017-2021 District and State Trends of Special Education Staff per 100 SWDs



6. Curriculum Administrative Assistant (Central Office)

Over the past few years, the role of the Curriculum Dept. has expanded significantly. This office had a broad array of responsibilities, including responsibility for managing and coordinating professional development activities of the district, identifying and advocating for resource needs within the school, such as the Instructional Coach positions, and for the planning of periodic reviews of curriculum materials, piloting of potential replacements, and securing funding for replacement programs through the budget process, or other funding sources. A part time role of 9 hours per week does not provide sufficient support to the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning so that these broad responsibilities can be managed and maintained sustainably as the district moves forward.

7. Elementary School Literacy Coach (shared across BES and BMS)

The Elementary Literacy Coach/Coordinator position is an expansion of the existing stipend position into a full-time salaried position similar to the Elementary Mathematics Coach/Coordinator. The role of the individual will be to serve in an instructional capacity to support all elementary teachers and the building principals in both elementary schools during the school year. With the necessary experience and expertise in place, the literacy coach/coordinator will guide teachers to improve instructional practices in the classroom, bring forward research-based strategies based on continuous professional growth, provide training of new materials, facilitate workshops, analyze data with staff and the building principal, and serve as a resource to both schools and the parent community.

8. Class Link - Single Sign-On Software

9. Pre-school at Boylston Elementary (Staffing)

This is being proposed as an additional pre-school program in the district. Currently, Boylston pre-k students attend pre-school at Tahanto. That program would continue, when this program is added. This is a mixture of special education students receiving services outlined in their IEP and regular education students that pay fees to attend. The program would require a teacher, and at least one instructional aide. It is estimated that the fees received would cover the cost of the instructional aide, and the teacher position would need to be funded by the budget.

One of the challenges of the current model is that the specialists (O/T, P/T, Speech) the provide direct services to these students need to travel from Boylston Elementary, where they service students in Grades K to 5, to Tahanto to service pre-school students. This leads to non-productive travel time between the schools, cutting into the available time of this staff.

There has also been increased demand for pre-school in recent years, and it is anticipated that this program would not be difficult to fill, while maintaining existing program at Tahanto. The Tahanto program provides a career training program in Early Childhood Education to students participating in this program, with a combination of classwork and hands-on training in the pre-school class.

10. Reduce Usage of School Choice

School Choice funds (\$5,000 per student) are received by the district when Berlin-Boylston schools open up and fill extra seats in classrooms for students from other towns. This revenue is used to offset a portion of teacher salaries in the operating budget. Currently, for the FY22 budget, the district has budgeted to take in \$540,000 in school choice revenues, and to apply \$803,000 towards the operating budget. This deficit spending is possible by accessing prior year carryover balances of school choice funds, which have a healthy balance. The district ended FY21 with \$1,825,495 in school choice balances, distributed across all three schools. The strategic use of school choice funds in excess of what the district is receiving is not sustainable over the long term, and eventually, if continued, these reserves will be depleted. That said, this can be addressed over time, so the current budget proposal is for a slight reduction in the use of school choice funds in the budget process.

11. Musical Instrument Repairs/Replacement (district wide)

While many students opt to rent instruments, the district has a significant number of students from economically disadvantaged families. Consistent with the district's equity goal, these students should have access to instruments, regardless of their ability to pay, or rent these instruments. The district maintains a modest inventory of instruments that are loaned out to students from economically disadvantaged families, however, there are a significant portion that are in poor condition and need to be replaced or repaired. Funding for this item would cover acquisition costs of new instruments, and/or repairs to existing inventory.

12. Tahanto Counseling Department – add 1.0 FTE, restructure

This position would allow Tahanto to increase services to better support students and families, and allow current school counselors to shift into the following roles:

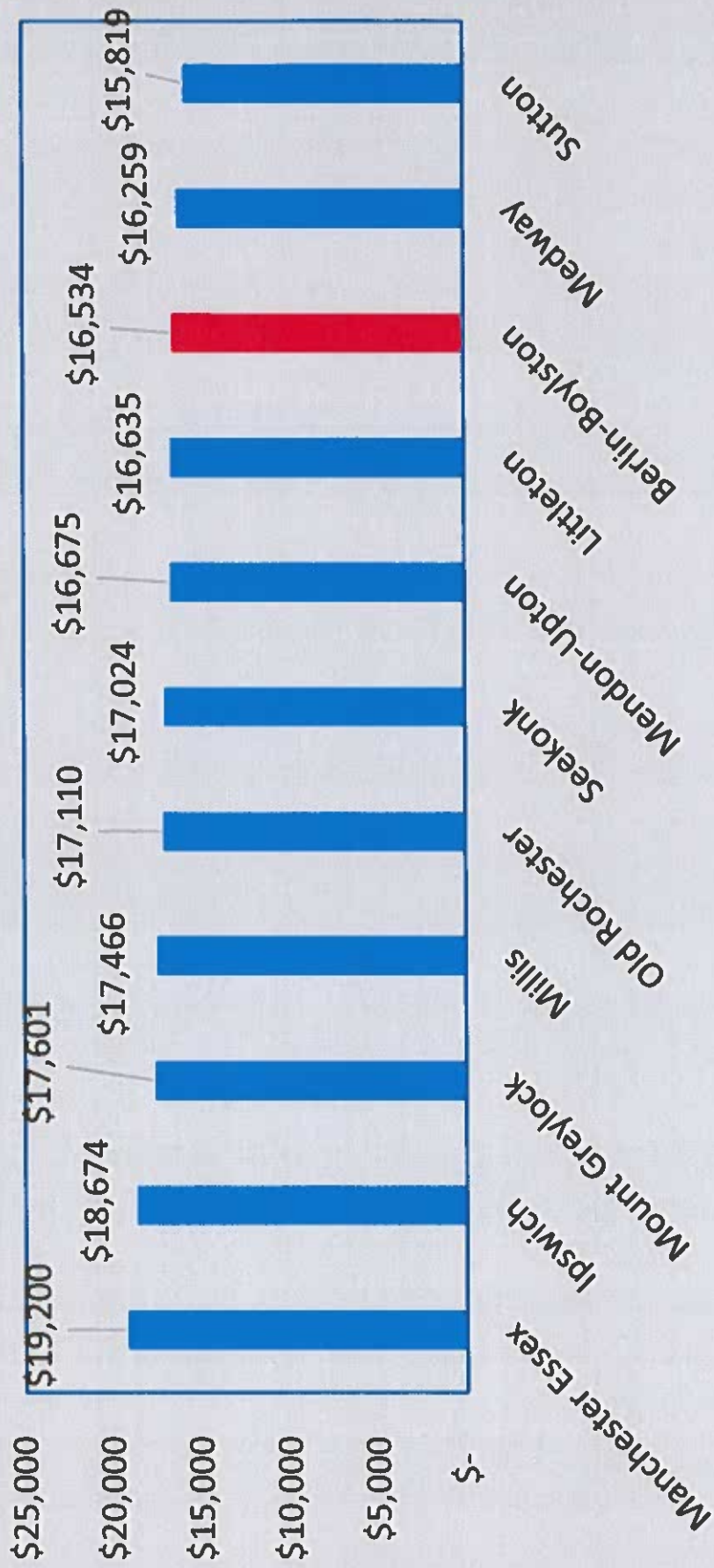
- A. 1 school counselor solely focused on grades 6-8 to increase social-emotional supports, curriculum development, and overall support to families.
- B. 1 school counselor focused on grades 11-12, including the internship program coordinator. This is part of the DIP in order to make available to our 11th and 12th graders the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in various fields.
- C. Additional school counselor would be responsible for grades 9-10 as well as PSAT and AP testing coordination

13. Add 1.0 FTE STEM Teacher (Tahanto)

Reasoning: This is part of the DIP in order to begin decreasing the number of teachers who teach 6 classes in STEM, as well as to improve/increase the variety of course offerings.

The recommendation is also tied into the request to move our part-time athletic director to full-time. This new STEM position would take over the 3 classes the AD currently teaches and allow for the athletic director to fulfill their role and responsibilities as needed. This would also allow for Tahanto athletes to attend workshops on leadership, community involvement, and developing positive social-emotional supports for all athletes. The full-time AD position could also include daily administrative duties such as lunch, covering classes when needed, supervising detentions in-between seasons, etc.

Per Pupil Exp.'s - DESE Comp. Districts (DART)



FY2023 Budget Calendar – Upcoming Dates and Events

Tuesday, December 14, 2021:	Preliminary Budget Presentation to School Committee
Mid-January 2022:	State of MA and DESE release preliminary guidance on key budget inputs <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Minimum local contributions for municipalities- Foundation enrollment- School choice tuition and charter school tuition projections- State Aid Revenue to Schools (Chapter 70, Chapter 71)
Tuesday, February 15, 2022:	Public Budget Hearing (School Committee Meeting)
Tuesday, March 8, 2022:	School Committee Vote on FY2023 Budget
Monday, May 2, 2022:	Town of Berlin Annual Town Meeting 6:30 p.m.
Monday, May 2, 2022:	Town of Boylston Annual Town Meeting 7:00 p.m.