



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

January 23, 2013

Fiscal Year 2014 School Department Budget Superintendent's Budget Message

Introduction

...(P)reservation of their rights and liberties...depend(s) on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education...(It) shall be the duty of legislators and magistrates in all future periods of this commonwealth to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences...especially (in) public schools, and grammar schools in the towns...

~ John Adams, Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In this excerpt from our state constitution, John Adams outlines the duty to “cherish” (which in those times meant to “support”) public education. Adams’ constitutional mandate was affirmed in 1993 by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in a ruling that launched a successful education reform movement in Massachusetts, with substantial state financial support. Two decades later, our state’s public education system is, by many measures, the best in the nation and among the best in the world.

We are now in the midst of a second wave of education reform that originated at the federal level, first through the *No Child Left Behind* legislation of 2001 and more recently through the *Race to the Top* program begun in 2009. This national emphasis on education is understandable given the rapid transformation of our economy to one where high levels of education will be necessary for most higher wage jobs in the future. Economists and education policy makers are predicting that students of today must be prepared for a tomorrow where the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, solve problems innovatively, and utilize technology skillfully will be required for success.

Whether it was John Adams’ time or now, it is clear that society’s investment in education is crucial to its future wellbeing. In Shrewsbury, we are fortunate to have a long track record of success in educating our community’s youth. The quality of our schools is a major reason why families choose to purchase homes in our town, and is perhaps the greatest factor in the value of residential real estate. Shrewsbury is held in high esteem among Massachusetts school districts, with a reputation for being highly professional and innovative while at the same time being extremely efficient with its resources. That efficiency applies to everything from personnel, to educational materials, to the school buildings themselves. The successes our students demonstrate on measures of academic achievement, in academic competitions, through the visual and performing arts, through athletics, and through community service are remarkable. There is no question that the Shrewsbury Public Schools provide exceptional value to our community.

The State of Our School District

Unfortunately, in my role as superintendent, it is incumbent upon me to communicate to you that our schools are in a fragile state. The difficult reality is that our current resources are not able to

keep up with demand, which is jeopardizing our ability to deliver the quality of education that our students deserve and that our community expects. This has manifested in several ways:

- a significant majority of classes have enrollment that is much too high, affecting the quantity and quality of attention, instruction, and feedback students receive from educators and straining both physical limitations of classroom spaces and the social/emotional tenor of classroom environments;
- multiple years of underinvestment in technology, textbooks, and instructional materials has resulted in an inventory that is out of date and creates obstacles to providing the educational experiences our students need to be successful;
- a lack of curriculum support and professional development opportunities for educators has constrained the district's ability to address its strategic priorities and adopt state and federal mandates;
- existing levels of personnel support for students' social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs have not been able to keep pace with increases in demand; and
- funding from external sources such as PTOs and booster organizations has been used increasingly as substitute funding for fundamental program needs, rather than for uses that enrich the educational program (even with this external funding and additional funding through fees, our athletics program faces a structural deficit).

It must be noted that these challenging circumstances have taken a toll on our staff. There is no question in my mind that staff morale is at its lowest point during my fifteen-plus years in Shrewsbury, and this is of great concern to me. To be clear, this is not a "woe is us" dynamic, but rather a sense of stress and frustration that has arisen among educators who have too many demands and not enough time or resources to meet them. The pace of change is fast due to various mandates and initiatives, and many of our practitioners have class sizes or caseloads that are larger than ever before, which makes even the routine elements of the program more difficult to implement.

In addition to the challenges outlined above, it is important to note that the cost of doing business continues to rise, as inflationary pressures affect operational costs in areas such as specialized special education placements outside the district, transportation for in-district and out of district students, athletics, etc. Additionally, costs for existing personnel will increase modestly due to contractual obligations for represented employees and similar treatment for non-represented employees. On top of this, the issue of school security has emerged as a priority in the aftermath of the Newtown, Connecticut tragedy and addressing this will require an investment in both physical and human resources.

During the fall and the winter of the current year, the feedback I have received from educators and parents indicates that our system is stressed beyond its capacity in too many ways. In the short term, we are coping with ongoing resource limitations as well as current situations designed to be temporary, such as the shared principal model between Beal Early Childhood Center and Paton School this year and the hiatus of the Director of Foreign Language position after a retirement in November. It is my professional opinion that our organization cannot continue with this reduced level of support and service for a sustained period of time without compromising the quality of education in Shrewsbury. High class sizes, lack of curriculum materials and support, outdated and lack of technology, and insufficient student support services are eroding the

foundation of the excellent educational program that has been built up over time. Over the next few budget cycles, it will be crucial to repair short-term damage and invest resources to avoid long-term negative consequences for our schools and our community. The Fiscal Year 2014 Budget recommendation that follows was developed with this in mind.

John Adams urged that “the opportunities and advantages of education” be spread throughout the Commonwealth in order to protect the values we hold dear. While I am cognizant of the fiscal challenges that our community faces, it is my sincere hope that enough of our town’s resources can be allocated to the School Department in FY14 to stop the deterioration of our educational program and begin the recovery that will be necessary to preserve the excellence of our schools.

Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Recommendation

In September 2012, the School Department administration identified an early, preliminary FY14 budget gap of about \$4.6 million. Since that time, I have carefully considered input from staff, parents, and community members gathered through various sources, including the public budget hearing in October 2012, various correspondence, meetings with advisory groups of faculty and parents, and through open office hours at each of the nine schools. The School Committee has directed me to present a recommendation that avoids additional reductions in personnel or program and addresses the difficulties our schools are experiencing during the current year, with the understanding that not all needs could be addressed in a single budget cycle. As a result, the following recommendation represents a budget that would accomplish the following:

- preserve what we currently have in place for personnel and programming while addressing increasing costs and requirements;
- improve class sizes at each level, while still leaving many above our guidelines;
- restore some of the administrative positions previously cut;
- provide increased capacity to address social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs;
- build some capacity to implement strategic priorities and state mandates in curriculum, instruction, technology, and professional development; and
- increase capacity to ensure staff are trained in emergency procedures and to better monitor school entrances and visitors.

This budget recommendation would require \$4,414,527 in additional appropriated funds, which would represent an 8.85% increase in the School Department’s appropriation compared with the current fiscal year. While it is unlikely that the town will have sufficient resources to meet this budget request, it is important to illustrate the resources I believe would be necessary to bring our existing program forward and address a number of key needs and strategic priorities.

While a detailed, line item budget proposal accompanies this document, the following tables describe the additional funding that this budget plan would require.

Table 1: Restoration of Teachers to Address Class Size

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Elementary/Early Childhood Teachers: 7.5 FTE	\$391,215	Addition of these positions would bring most elementary class sizes within School Committee guidelines; includes 2.5 FTE at Beal to provide class size relief at Floral Street (3 Gr. 1 classes move to Beal); 1.0 FTE Gr. 2 and 1.0 FTE Gr. 4 at Coolidge; 1.0 FTE Gr. 4 at Paton; 1.0 FTE Gr. 1 and 1.0 FTE Gr. 4 at Spring Street
Middle School Teachers: 8.0 FTE	\$417,296	Addition of these positions would move class size from 29/30 to 26 across all middle grades; would add 4.0 FTE in Gr. 6; 2.0 FTE in Gr. 7; and 2.0 FTE in Gr. 8
High School Teachers: 6.0 FTE	\$312,972	Addition of these positions would improve class size in many sections and make limited restorations to elective classes; would add 1.0 FTE in the following departments: English, Foreign Language, Math, Science, Social Science & Visual Arts
Total Teacher Restoration: 21.5 FTE	\$1,121,483	Note: FTE estimated to restore all class sizes within School Committee guidelines would be 31.0 FTE

Table 2: Restoration of Administrators

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Principal – Beal Early Childhood Center	\$105,000	Position was covered by Paton principal for one year, not a viable option for next year (salary is estimate based on approved School Committee range)
Director of Foreign Languages	\$65,638	Position was left vacant after Nov 2012 retirement, not a viable option for next year (additional funds estimate for difference between FY13 partial salary and FY14 full salary)
Middle Schools Mathematics Coordinator	\$90,051	Middle schools math and social studies coordinator positions were cut for FY13; mandated state-level curriculum changes in math require leadership capacity to implement; mandated new educator evaluation system requires additional supervisory capacity
Total Administrator Restoration: 3.0 FTE	\$260,689	Note: Does not restore Middle Schools Social Studies Coordinator

Table 3: Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Updating textbooks and instructional materials	\$194,000	Years of deferred purchases have created critical demand; see memo from Assistant Superintendent for details
Professional development	\$98,000	Internal and external training required to meet state mandates and advance strategic priorities; see memo from Assistant Superintendent for details
Total Curriculum, Instruction & PD	\$292,000	

Table 4: Technology and Media Services

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Increased wireless capacity at Oak Middle School and Shrewsbury High School to accommodate 1:1 device initiative	\$168,000	Includes additional access points and switch upgrades
Hardware	\$263,000	Includes critical replacement of Foreign Language Lab computers at \$40,000; also includes cost to expand 1:1 iPad program to Oak Middle School - total cost will be offset by over \$200,000 in fees for take-home option for iPads, net cost \$238,000; installs interactive white boards in 24 additional elementary classrooms; see memo from Technology Director
Software	\$43,000	Includes critical replacement of Foreign Language Lab software at \$25,000; also includes cost for software to run SHS 1:1 technology pilot at \$20,000; software for SAT prep services at \$3,000
Additional Technology Support Technician to support 1:1 program: 1.0 FTE	\$45,000	Currently 1.0 FTE at middle level; 1:1 iPad program expansion requires additional support (2,000+ devices in Grades 5-8)
Media/Library Materials	\$7,500	All purchases were deferred last year
Total Technology	\$526,500	

Table 5: Special Education and Pupil Personnel

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Additional Required Special Education Paraprofessionals: 9.0 FTE	\$191,932	Required to provide mandated services to students with significant special needs (some move-ins during current year; some transitioning from preschool); inability to provide this service could require additional out-of-district placements
Additional Required Special Education Teacher at Beal Early Childhood Center: 1.0 FTE	\$52,162	Required to provide mandated services to students who will be moving from preschool to kindergarten; inability to provide this service could require additional out-of-district placements
Additional Required Assistive Technology Specialist: 1.0 FTE (possibility to add as contracted service)	\$52,162	Support for implementation of use of various assistive technology devices for students with significant special needs; currently only 1.0 FTE for entire district, cannot keep up with demand; inability to provide this service could require additional out-of-district placements
Additional Clinical Behavioral Specialist: 1.0 FTE (possibility to add as contracted service)	\$61,263	Incidences of extreme issues with behavioral health have outstripped current capacity of 1.0 FTE; inability to provide this service could require additional out-of-district placements
Additional Preschool-Grade 4 Psychologist Support: 0.8 FTE	\$55,672	Increases part time psychologists at Parker Road, Beal & Spring Street to full time to provide more capacity to respond to social/emotional/behavioral/mental health needs.
Additional Special Education Team Chair Position for Coolidge and Paton: 1.0 FTE	\$63,861	Removes team chair administrative duties from psychologists at Coolidge and Paton to allow full time psychologists at those schools to provide more capacity to respond to social/emotional/behavioral/mental health needs.

Additional Special Education Team Chair/Early Intervention Liaison for Preschool: 0.6 FTE	\$38,317	Currently cannot keep up with demand for transition planning for Early Intervention and transition from preschool to kindergarten
Additional Adjustment Counselor at Middle Schools: 1.0 FTE	\$52,162	Currently cannot keep up with demand for counseling services at middle level
Contractual Service Costs	\$55,738	Net increase to contracted services for psychiatric and health services
Additional duties for Out-of-District Coordinator	\$10,000	Current Out-of-District Coordinator is retiring and is on teacher school year pay scale; this will allow position to move to full year status to provide needed support to meet mandated deadlines, etc. during summer months
Add Elementary Special Education Coordinator: 1.0 FTE	\$89,056	Elementary is only level without administrative support for special education personnel and operations; new mandated evaluation program will require additional capacity to implement; will provide capacity to improve transition planning and build program efficiencies at elementary level
Total Special Education and Pupil Personnel: 16.4 FTE	\$720,715	

Table 6: Special Education Operations

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Out-of-District Tuition Cost Increases	\$398,892	Based on projected census and tuition rate increases; see Special Education budget report
Out-of-District Transportation Cost Increases	\$20,826	Contractor rate increase of 2%
Required Bus Monitors for In District Specialized Transportation	\$48,000	Contracted service; based on projected need for 2 additional monitors for transporting students with significant disabilities within district, plus rate increase of 2%
Total Special Education Operations	\$467,718	

Table 7: Miscellaneous Operations

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
In-District Regular Transportation Cost Increase	\$21,170	Estimate; will depend on bid
Homeless Transportation Cost Increases	\$50,000	Estimate based on past need to meet mandate of McKinney-Vento law
Athletic Program Needs	\$100,000	Current year allotment was \$90,000 below projected costs; may be offset by sponsorships
Substitutes (Daily and Long Term)	\$88,000	Based on recent history; current year is significantly underfunded
General Operations Cost Increases/Needs	\$61,896	Copying, maintenance, miscellaneous supplies, etc.; have deferred many of these costs
School & Department Discretionary Needs	\$50,000	i.e. "Site Based Funds," to meet pent up demand for school and department educational materials and operational costs
Total Misc. Operational Costs	\$409,508	

Table 8: School Safety and Security

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Part Time SHS Receptionist/Entry Monitor for After School Hours – Part Time 0.4 FTE	\$10,000	
Part time Receptionists/Entry Monitors for Midday at Elementary and Middle Levels: 2.8 FTE	\$70,000	
Miscellaneous Costs for Emergency Response Materials and Training	\$23,000	
Total Safety and Security 3.6 FTE (all part time)	\$113,990	Does not include any costs for installation of security systems; separate proposal will be made as necessary based on recommendation of Safety & Security Committee.

Table 9: Salary & Wage Adjustments

Proposed Budget Item	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Teacher Salary Contractual Adjustments	\$380,000	Net cost after factoring in 14 retirement differentials; based on providing full step increases for those eligible and previously agreed 0.25% (.0025) cost of living adjustment as of last day of current contract; successor contract under negotiation
Assistant Principal/Athletic Director Contractual Adjustments	\$24,000	Based on providing full step increases for those eligible and previously agreed 0.25% (.0025) cost of living adjustment as of last day of current contract; successor contract under negotiation
Paraprofessional Contractual Adjustments	\$150,000	Based on agreement for full steps and 1.5% (.015) cost of living adjustment
Non-Represented Staff	\$80,000	Estimate; will be at discretion of the School Committee
Total Salary & Wage Adjustments	\$634,000	

Table 10: Summary

Budget Category	New funds required in FY14	Notes
Restoration of Teachers to Address Class Size	\$1,121,483	21.5 Teacher FTE
Restoration of Administrators	\$260,689	3.0 Administrator FTE
Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development	\$292,000	
Technology & Media Services	\$526,500	1.0 Technology Support Staff FTE
Special Education & Pupil Personnel	\$720,715	9.0 Paraprofessional FTE; 6.4 Professional FTE; 1.0 Administrative FTE
Special Education Operations	\$467,718	Includes increases in out-of-district tuitions, transportation
Miscellaneous Operations	\$409,508	Includes in-district transportation, substitutes, athletic program, etc.
Safety & Security	\$113,990	3.6 Receptionist/Monitor FTE (all part time)
Salary & Wage Adjustments	\$634,000	
Total New Funds Recommended	\$4,546,603	
Offset for reduced Summer Special Education costs	(\$86,428)	Fewer positions required through efficiencies
Offset for projected lower enrollment in vocational/technical high school	(\$14,648)	
Offset for reduced moving expenses	(\$31,000)	Move to new Sherwood Middle School in FY13 required additional funding
Grand Total Recommended School Department Budget Increase	\$4,414,527	Represents an 8.85% increase FY13 = \$49,864,477 FY14 = \$54,279,004

Conclusion

In December 2011, the School Committee adopted a set of five-year strategic priorities to guide the work of the school district. This budget plan addresses these priorities in a variety of ways, such as:

Engage and Challenge All Students

- Providing additional teachers to improve class sizes in order to ensure all students receive the attention and feedback they need
- Investing in curriculum, instruction, and professional development to ensure educators are using best practices to provide the skills and knowledge our students need for future success

Enhance Learning through Technology

- Advancing the district's goal to have all students in preschool-grade 4 benefit from interactive technology and to have all students in grades 5-12 utilize a personal device for learning
- Using technology to strengthen teaching and learning in ways not possible with traditional tools

Promote Health and Wellbeing

- Providing more specialized support to assist students who struggle with behavioral, social, emotional, and mental health issues

Increase Value to the Community

- Preserving and improving upon the high levels of performance in a school district that contributes significantly to the property value and quality of life in Shrewsbury

In addition to addressing these strategic priorities, this budget plan seeks resources to implement significant state-level mandates. The highest profile of these is the required introduction of a comprehensive new educator evaluation system in FY14, which will require significant amounts of administrator time to properly implement. There are also significant state-level changes being mandated in curriculum (especially math and English language learner education) that must be addressed in order to properly prepare for the next generation of state assessments that are just over the horizon.

John Adams' inclusion of a duty to support public education in the Massachusetts Constitution was unusual for that time, and it speaks strongly to his belief that citizens' rights and liberties are dependent upon those citizens being well educated. I look forward to working with the School Committee, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Town Manager and Town Meeting members in our collective effort to be effective stewards of education in Shrewsbury. I realize that there are great challenges ahead, but I am confident that, over time, we will ensure that the excellence of our schools is preserved so that we may continue to prepare our children well for their future.