



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

February 9, 2022

To: School Committee
From: Joe Sawyer
Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Budget – Options for Investment

The Fiscal Year 2023 School Department appropriated budget, for the first time in the town's history, will be governed by the watershed fiscal agreement between the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen regarding fiscal policy connected to the operational override passed last spring by Shrewsbury voters.

Based upon the latest information on revenue projections from Town Manager Kevin Mizikar, we expect that the “cap” on the increase for the School Department appropriation will be 4.75% for FY23. Presuming that this is approved by Town Meeting as the final budget, this will provide \$3,596,803 in new appropriated funds over the current year. This will enable all of our current personnel and programs to be appropriately funded for next year (accounting for pre-pandemic levels of expenditures in areas such as curriculum materials, along with typical cost escalations and inflation) with no risk of cuts or layoffs due to lack of funds, which is a wonderful position to be in compared to the difficulties of past years. This level of funding will also allow for a current estimate of \$878,310 in funds to be invested in improving the district's ability to achieve its mission, whether through funding strategic priorities or restoring previous budget cuts.

The District Leadership Team (all district administrators) submitted ideas for the use of additional funds, and the School Leadership Team (Central Office administrators and principals) reviewed these and sought consensus on key areas for funding. Based on these exercises and additional conversations with various district leaders, the enclosed table lists the potential investments that I believe make the most sense given the current landscape and needs. These options include:

- Additions to special education services where student needs and enrollment require it, including restoring a previously cut preschool teacher and aide, adding a special education teacher at SHS, and adding a partial speech and language pathologist position.

- Adding an English language education teacher at the elementary level due to increased enrollment of English language learners at the Coolidge and Beal Schools.
- Investing significantly in increasing specialized personnel to address students' mental and behavioral health and social and emotional well-being, including:
 - two additional adjustment counselors at SHS;
 - two additional clinical coordinators (who are board-certified behavior analysts) to assist with student cases of significant behavioral challenges across the district;
 - the addition of a Director of Clinical Counseling & Mental Health Services to coordinate the work of adjustment counselors, school psychologists, and clinical coordinators across the district;
 - adding an additional adjustment counselor at the middle school level;
 - providing a social worker to address significant family needs and barriers while coordinating with outside social services agencies;
 - adding an instructional coach at the elementary level who will coordinate social emotional learning programming and provide ongoing staff training and coaching to implement best practices to integrate supports throughout the elementary program; and
 - moving the existing mindfulness director position from grant/donation funding to the appropriated budget.
- Restoring two allied arts teaching positions at the middle level. The specific special subject(s) are to be determined, but adding back these positions will provide more ability for all middle school students to experience the same allied arts opportunities while expanding the different types of experiences.
- Eliminating the activity fees to participate in co-curricular activities such as clubs, musicals and plays, etc. in order to remove a barrier to access for students from families who have trouble affording the fee and reduce pressure on families given that over time we have become a high-fee district.

I look forward to discussing these options with you at your budget workshop and hearing your perspectives. It is my hope that all of these options can ultimately be brought into the budget plan, whether through the additional funds currently estimated to be available in the appropriated budget, through adjustments as our cost estimates for the next fiscal year mature, and through other sources such as grant funds. Your input will be important regarding prioritization of these options as we finalize the recommended FY23 budget plan.