



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596, 0612, FY21 Budget

BPS Commitment 5: Cultivate Trust

BPS Commitment 6: Activate Partnerships

Working Session: Wednesday, May 20, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

BPS Commitment 5 & 6 Hearing: Tuesday, May 26, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

BPS COVID-19 Adjustments Hearing: Tuesday, May 26, 2020, 1:00 p.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the FY21 budget for Boston Public Schools at the Working Sessions on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. Recording here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aS4_a-EJ6vE

The Administration is requested to respond to all questions in one of three ways:

- Verbally at the hearings on Tuesday, May 26th, at 10AM or 1PM.
- For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 26th, including budget book page numbers or other references where appropriate.
- By deferring to a specific scheduled departmental budget hearing.

Please annotate and return this information request before May 26th, indicating how each question will be answered.

BPS Commitments 5 & 6 Budget Questions

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- Are there any metrics to measure Covid-19 related learning loss?
 - What remedial strategies are in place to address Covid-19 related learning loss?
- How many occupational and physical therapists are at BPS?
 - What is the total cost?
- How many speech pathologists are at BPS?
 - What is the total cost?
- What is the total cost of bus monitors?
- What are we doing to enhance the physical education curriculum, especially for students who may not be inclined towards team athletics?
 - What are we doing to expand the curriculum to include new and different programs?
- Can you provide a breakdown of all of BPS partnerships?
 - What partnerships do we pay for?

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

- Can you provide more information on what BPS is doing to improve the graduation rate?



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- Why has it decreased?
- What is BPS doing to decrease transportation costs?
- Are there any updates on electrifying the BPS fleet?
- What are the plans to safely transport students in the fall?
- What can be done to decrease out-of-district transportation costs?
 - What can be done to decrease the number of students that attend out-of-district schools?
- What will summer school look like this year?
- What are the overall plans to expand My Way Café? How many new schools will the planned capital work enable to have My Way Café, and how many are we targeting eventually?
- How has delivering meals affected the budget?
- What are the two new positions that were added to the Central Office?
 - Can you provide salary information on Central Office staffing?
- Can you provide a breakdown of Central Office personnel and positions?
- Can you provide more information on the increase in health care costs?
- Why is there an increase in utility costs?
- Can you provide information on the increase in educational supplies and materials?
- Why is there a decrease in “food supplies” costs?
 - What are “food supplies”?
- Why is there a decrease in the reserve account – is this related to collective bargaining timing?
- Why is there an increase in lease purchases?
- What percentage of the BPS fleet is electric?
- Can you provide an update on the excess pool?
 - How many teachers are assigned to it, and what are we doing to find more of them appropriate placements?

Councilor Ed Flynn asked:

- What are the challenges when transporting students with disabilities?
 - What can be done to improve transporting these students?
- Can you provide information on school safety and public health?
 - What is the protocol for parents and visitors visiting our schools?
- Can you provide an update on the nutritional programs at BPS?



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- Can we expand the food access program?
- What are the major partnerships that BPS has?
 - Which businesses or non-profits?
 - Are we doing enough to partner with big businesses that may be getting tax breaks in our city and should be stepping up to support our kids?
- Can you provide information on the recruitment efforts being done within the Central Office to increase language access?

Councilor Kim Janey, President asked:

- Why is there a 39 percent decrease in the Office of Equity and Strategy?
- Can you provide information on worker's comp claims?
- How much money have we spent on transportation since the shutdown?
 - If there was a savings, where is that money being redirected?
- How will we be transporting students safely going forward, given COVID-19?
 - What is the capacity of our typical bus sizes now, and how will that capacity be reduced given public health guidance for the fall?
- Are there any updates on the on-time transportation study from the consultant that was hired?
- How can we decrease transportation costs?
- Can you provide further details on the BPS contracts that were awarded to MBE and WBE or other local businesses?
- Can you provide information on summer learning this year?
- Can you provide demand and choice transportation data?
- What is being done to decrease door-to-door drop offs?
- What can we do to decrease out-of-district placement and transportation costs?
- Can you provide a breakdown on which schools have police officers?
- Which schools have My Way Café?
- Who are the food providers that deliver food to schools, and how can we diversify that pool?
 - Can you provide an update on the main food vendor contracts? When will we next have an opportunity to RFP these?
- What athletic programs and sports will be available in the fall?
- What are we doing to improve teacher retention, especially teachers of color?
- What are the plans to keep social distancing in our schools in the fall?



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- Is there analysis available on the needs for our schools, in terms of ensuring that our external partnerships are meeting those needs?
- How has the pandemic impacted our partnerships?
- Can you provide a breakdown on student retention, drop out, and graduation rates by demographics (race, age, location)?
- In regard to an issue that came up last year, do we need to formally adjust the Age 22 policy in order to help young people close to that age be able to graduate?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- Why is there a decrease in the Central Office and Administrative budget?
- What are we doing to improve teacher retention rates, especially for teachers of color?
- How many bus monitors are employed at BPS?
 - What is the cost of bus monitors?
- Can you provide information on BPS relationship with BRIC?
 - What are the BPS guidelines on information sharing?
- What are we doing to ensure that food served at BPS is fresh and local? How can we utilize small and local businesses to provide food to our students?
- What opportunities are there currently to allow teacher, students and parents to provide feedback on their remote learning experiences?
- Can you provide information on summer classes?
 - Are there opportunities for multi-lingual education this summer?
- What are we doing to improve opportunities to learn so-called “soft skills” or life skills in BPS?
- How are we using BPS partnerships to create opportunities for student employment?

Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George asked:

- How many 21 year olds are in BPS that will turn 22 before the end of the school year or graduation?
 - How are we supporting students who are transitioning out of BPS at this age?
- What sports and athletics will be available in the fall?
- Is there a need for additional coaches?
- Can we hire more athletic trainers, and have one available at every sports game?



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- What are we doing to enhance our athletics program?
- How is school restructuring and grade reconfiguration impacting the athletics program?
- What can be done to increase the number of electric vehicles in the BPS fleet?
- What impact has the pandemic had on our transportation budget?
- Are there plans to expand the Summer Eats programs?
- What are we doing to improve public safety in our schools?
- What are we doing to improve needle pick-up and disposal around our schools?

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair asked:

- How can we benchmark ourselves against other large urban school districts in terms of the proportion of Central Office positions and salary to positions and salaries within our schools? Can you provide some context on this?
- Can you provide more information on what proportion of Central Office costs are actual Central Office costs, compared to those being centrally funded but delivered at a school site?
- How can we better involve teachers and school administrators when developing new curriculum programs, even if the funding lives in Central Office? What is the plan for teacher involvement in implementation of the new Ethnic Studies coursework, for example?
- Why was there a significant increase in family and medical leave this year? Was this related to COVID-19, or prior?
- What is being done to improve retention rates, especially for teachers of color?
- There seems to be a problem with the reliability of one-to-one bus monitors, which can really disrupt the lives of parents. What can be done to address this issue?
- How are we reorganizing our schools to address public health concerns?
- How is BPS thinking about its strategy moving forward on food and food procurement – because it seems like we have this ongoing arrange with Revolution Foods, but we also started displacing that with My Way Café – what’s the long-term vision re: food quality and sourcing and access?
- How can we strategically utilize our food budgets to support small and local businesses through the economic recovery?
- What can be done to add more individualized athletic activities in way that is scalable and support schools that don’t have great gym facilities?



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- Can you provide more information on the transportation contract? We keep renewing the TransDev contract for single-year terms; when are we going to be in a position to issue a new RFP to adjust how we dictate the service that we want and pursue competitive pricing?
 - What is the overall long-term transportation plan and vision?
- Can you provide more information on summer school?
 - What can be done to expand summer school for all students, given that all students are being affected by COVID-19?
 - What are the costs for summer school this year – more because of involving more students, or less because of all being virtual?
- What robust measures are being put in place to address student learning loss?
 - What is being done to support students that were already off-track before the pandemic? It feels like we need a moonshot now to really catch all our students up, or else COVID could set our efforts to close the achievement gap back five years – and the one silver lining would be to also sweep up the students who were already struggling with a surge of resources – thoughts?
- Can you provide information on the overall partnership strategy?
 - How often are we paying our partners for services or programs?
 - What partners are putting resources into our schools and where?
 - How proactively do we match partners to concrete needs in our schools, vs. just accepting what a third-party offers to do?
 - Development of partnerships is so often dictated by personal relationships; do we have a clear map or sense of where we have real strengths or holes in the partnership landscape, and how to even that out?
- If students are unable to return to classrooms in the fall, how will we be supporting the transition for teachers receiving new students in the fall?
 - It seems very hard for teachers to build virtual relationships with students and families they've never met; has BPS been thinking about having teachers stay paired with their existing classes until we are back in person?