



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

BPS Commitment #1

Working Session: Tuesday, May 4, 2021, 2:00 p.m.

BPS Commitment #1 (I) Hearing: Tuesday, May 11, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

BPS Commitment #1 (II) Hearing: Tuesday, May 11, 2021, 2:00 p.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the FY22 budget for Boston Public Schools Commitment #1 at the Working Session on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

Recording here: <https://youtu.be/6jxBne5Bovg>

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

1. Verbally at the relevant hearing on Tuesday, May 11th, at 10AM or 2PM.
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 11th, including budget book page numbers or other references where appropriate.
3. By deferring to a specific scheduled departmental budget hearing.

Please annotate and return this information request before May 11th, indicating how each question will be answered.

BPS Commitment #1 Budget Questions

BPS Commitment #1 (I) (Overall Alignment and Wraparound Supports) includes the following sub-topics:

- *OAG Policy Alignment, Implementation, Progress*
- *Workforce Diversity*
- *Curriculum Bias Review*
- *Code of Conduct Implementation, Disproportionality*
- *Social/Emotional Learning & Wellness*
- *Family Liaisons, Social Workers, School Psychologists, Nurses*
- *Trauma/Crisis Response*
- *Behavioral & Mental Health Supports*
- *HERN*

BPS Commitment #1 (II) (Specialized Academic Supports) includes the following subtopics:

- *Inclusion*
- *SPED/SPED Transitions*
- *ELL & Bilingual Education Plan*
- *Tutoring, Vacation and Summer Programming*

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

May 11th 10AM hearing

- Please provide an update on curriculum bias review. The inverse of that is to ensure that the curriculum is not just not biased but actively inclusive of students' experiences and cultures and community histories; what do we do proactively and systematically on that front? *(If Academics is better suited to answer the second part of this, defer it to the May 18th hearings.)*
- Disproportionality and discipline is an area of concern, especially in regard to black boys and girls, and reflected in the conversations we've been having recently about the McKinley Schools. How can we make sure that McKinley is providing targeted behavioral help and not serving as a funnel for a school to prison pipeline? What is BPS doing to track data on this front and what if anything are we changing policy-wise to address this problem?
- Can you talk in greater detail about how the family liaisons and social workers are being trained, supervised, evaluated, and supported? These are very important new support workers for our schools, and we don't want them to be adrift, feeling like a lone agent without much support, or ineffective and unaccountable. Obviously a lot rides on them having a clear sense of their role and the support needed to do it effectively.
- We understand that there has been very diverse hiring for the new social worker and family liaison roles; what have the demographics of new teacher hiring looked like in the past year?
- What is the four year graduation rate and drop out rate for our students with disabilities, those with behavioral health issues, and our low income students? How do they compare to the rates for the student body as a whole?
- Many folks have suggested a surge in 1:1 mental health counseling for our students as they return to school after a traumatic year; are we thinking about one-time contracts to add that kind of intensive support in the year ahead, as we might if a specific school had experienced a tragedy?
- What data do we collect to understand the shape of homelessness, formal and informal, in the district? How has that changed over the past year? What follow-ups are we doing with the 1000 BPS families who found housing through vouchers? How many students are we transporting to and from shelter?
- Thinking again about the federal funds, are there one-time facility or equipment investments that we've identified as relevant to closing the Opportunity & Achievement Gap?

May 11th 2PM hearing

- How many students with IEPs are in private placements that BPS supports financially, and what plans are there to support more of these placements within BPS? Generally, what are the student populations that are not being served within BPS, such that they tend to go to private placements, and what do we need to do to serve them better?

- There is \$305 million in the FY22 special education budget, which is about a \$12 million increase or 4.1% over the FY21 adopted budget. Can you detail how much of the increase is due to regular cost increases and how much (if any) is for new investments?
- We had several dedicated hearings on inclusion last year, and the need to make our inclusion approach more consistent and rigorous. Obviously there are a lot of aspects of improving inclusion may have been difficult to implement over this past year due to the largely remote instruction, but please provide an update on the roadmap and where we are on it as we try to bring more coherence, consistency, and quality to inclusion in the district.
- Please provide an update on the state of ELL and bilingual education; this is another area where we are aiming for a real revamp and roadmap for a district-wide plan, which we realize may have gotten somewhat derailed by COVID.
- Can you talk about the new Vietnamese dual-language program introduced last year?
- What data have we tracked on how the challenges of the past year have impacted our ELL learners specifically, and what are we aiming to provide in terms of supports for this student community in the coming year?
- The Council had a hearing a few weeks ago about BPS summer programming, but it was at the point of just being about to launch to the public, so it would be great if the District could provide an update. How many spots do we foresee having in the different options, and what are we doing to get awareness of those options out to all our BPS families?
- What portion of summer 2021 programming do we expect to support with ESSER II and III funds, and in what ways?
- Many folks have suggested a surge in 1:1 tutoring to help support students whose academic work has suffered from the lack of a person over their shoulder during remote learning; are we thinking about one-time contracts to add that kind of intensive support in the year ahead? Is this a possible use of federal funds -- knowing that it has to be time-limited, since those funds drop away and cannot support permanent staff?
- We hear from parents that the year of remote learning has not worked well for many students with disabilities. BPS plans to dedicate \$5 million in ESSER II funds for interventions for students with disabilities, to address the impact of COVID on their wellbeing. Can you speak to what kinds of interventions those will be, and what we have been able to learn, in planning for the use of those funds, about what these students most need in this moment?
- There is also \$2.25 million in ESSER II funds dedicated to interventions for ELL students in FY22. What are these for, and how many students will they serve?
- Overall, since we're talking about some of our student populations that have been most disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, how are you planning to use federal funds this year in ways that wrap around our students with support but don't create cliffs, knowing that this funding will run out in several years? Are there one-time facility or equipment investments that would particularly benefit these students?

Defer to May 25th hearing

- There has been a long term issue around the retention of teachers of color in BPS. Has the retention of teachers of color improved? Last year you spoke with us about an exit interview process; what did you learn about reasons for teacher departure and how the working environment can be improved?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

May 11th 2PM hearing

- I've been contacted by constituents about special education services for children with special needs in parochial or Jewish day schools. My understanding is that there is federal funding, and state and city funding, and state and city funding does not allow those services to be provided in parochial or Jewish schools but federal funding allows more flexibility. I would like to get a better understanding of that.
- In terms of support services for hearing-impaired children in out of district placements and funding for specialized services, how much is assigned, how many students are involved, how many students need additional services, and how is it administered?

Councilor Ed Flynn asked:

May 11th 10AM hearing

- With the increase in anti-Asian racism, are there any programs planned in FY22 to help kids who are being bullied and facing racism or discrimination in the classroom? Is there training provided to counselors and staff to support students who are dealing with racism and discrimination?
- What is the plan in FY22 to improve translation and interpretation services for students and families who speak a language other than English?
- Are there any programs or funding for anti-bias training for teachers and staff?

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:

May 11th 10AM hearing

- Please provide more information on plans to close the opportunity and achievement gap and the provision of wraparound services to get students back on track, especially after the pandemic, and considering the increasing need for trauma/crisis, mental health, and other supports. Please speak to how this fits in with the strategic plan and Commitment 1 in general.

Councilor Lydia Edwards asked:

May 11th 10AM hearing

- How is BPS setting up a system to assess our kids to make sure that their mental health and social and emotional well being is a priority?
- What plans or policies are being implemented for students to safely eat lunch together at school? I've heard that some students are eating outside on the ground; can you confirm that that is a temporary solution?
- What permanent digital infrastructure is BPS keeping and expanding upon now that we are moving out of the pandemic, in order to expand educational opportunities for the long-term?

Defer to May 25th hearing

- How are we actually setting up a real system for kids to access the resources we have, particularly for food access?
- In terms of school safety and having police officers in schools, please provide information on how BPS is thinking about this issue? How does the current policy, and any evolving thinking, interact with the information sharing ordinance the council is reviewing?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

May 11th 10AM hearing

- How is BPS working on making sure that BPS's OAG strategic plan is implemented across all strategic areas, and not just concentrated in a few?
- Specifically, how does the FY22 recommended budget fund the OAG policy? Which aspects of Commitment #1 are receiving funding and which are not (e.g. workforce diversity, curriculum bias review, ethnic studies, etc.)?
- How is BPS evaluating and identifying curriculum bias? What progress, if any, has been made on reducing curriculum biases? How will the FY22 budget address this?
- Is BPS planning on updating the Code of Conduct this year or sometime soon? (The last revision was in September 2014). If there are plans to update the Code of Conduct, what are the areas BPS will be looking at changing?
- Does BPS have a breakdown of Code of Conduct violations and does it track violations throughout the year? If so, can BPS provide a breakdown by gender, race, and ethnicity for Code of Conduct violations for SY19-20 and SY20-21? Could BPS also provide a breakdown by the type of violation?
- Given the pandemic's impact on housing insecurity over the past year, what new resources are being invested in HERN?
- How does BPS determine how many days a school psychologist is in the building and how does BPS determine this on a school-by-school basis?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

May 11th 10AM hearing

- The BPS website lists members of the OAG Task Force. Could you explain how the members of the Task Force were chosen and how the role of student voices can be included?
- In regards to Code of Conduct Implementation, could you provide us with some data around code of conduct violations by demographics? What percentage of code of conduct violations were issued to white students compared to students of color?
- Last year, we saw a cut in socio-emotional learning and an increase in socio-emotional intervention. This year, we're seeing a proposed cut in socio-emotional intervention and an increase in socio-emotional learning. What's the reason for these numbers going back and forth?
- How are we using this new federal funding to help create trauma-informed services for students who need help readjusting back to in-person classes? How can we do the same for teachers who have had to bear the burden of making all of these adjustments?

May 11th 2PM hearing

- One thing that a number of parents have made very clear is that special education services are critical and need to see greater funding. However, we are seeing cuts to SPED Early Childhood, SPED Lab, and SPED programs for the physically disabled. What are the reasons for these cuts?