

Education

OVERVIEW

The FY22 Boston Public Schools (BPS) budget reflects a collective determination to address disruption caused by the pandemic and come back stronger than ever as a district. A record \$1.3 billion in funding will support over 52,000 students at BPS, along with another \$247 million that will support approximately 11,244 Boston students in charter schools.

The increase of \$36 million over the FY21 adopted BPS budget is the second installment of a historic three-year, \$100 million commitment in school funding the City made beginning in 2020. This \$100 million is in addition to standard cost increases, such as inflation and employee costs, and equals the increase in state aid expected after the passage of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) in 2019. The City's growing investment comes at a time when other cities have implemented cuts to education spending amid difficult economic conditions. Boston's FY22 education budget, including the BPS operating budget and the City's charter school tuition assessment, continues to represent over 40% of the City's budget as a whole.

Following school closures in March 2020, BPS pivoted to remote learning and sought new ways to deliver critical services like meals and counseling to students and their families. BPS received assistance in these efforts from the Boston Public Health Commission and numerous other City departments and agencies, as well as the Boston Resiliency Fund. Significant costs for protective equipment, cleaning, and digital tools were partially offset by \$32.3 million in Elementary and Secondary

School Emergency Relief (ESSER I) funds that the district received from the federal government in FY20. Additionally, the City allocated a further \$20 million received through the CARES Act to BPS. These additional funds provided further assistance for a wide range of operational and service needs as the district adjusted to changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The district is also expected to receive an additional \$123 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER II) funds, a federal grant that can be used through FY23 and will augment the City's funding in important ways in the years to come.

FY22 investments in BPS are grouped in three categories: *Return*, *Recover*, and *Reimagine*. To meet facilities challenges and achieve a safe *return* to school buildings, the district is adding 20 custodians. In addition to \$1.4 million in operating funds, substantial funds from ESSER II will be put towards a successful reopening, including health and safety costs.

The *Recover* category responds to the learning loss and trauma that has disproportionately impacted many of the City's most vulnerable students: students of color, English language learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students. An investment in direct funding for schools will maintain key support positions despite enrollment declines. Students will have greater access to support in schools, as City investments and federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act will provide a full-time social worker in every school. By leveraging additional ESSER II funds, BPS will tackle other *Recover* priorities, such as targeted interventions for students with

the greatest needs and remedial education to address COVID-19 learning loss.

Reimagine expresses the Superintendent’s intention to transform BPS schools into what students need them to be, drawing from *ImagineBPS*, the five-year strategic plan released in FY20. The ESSER II funds allotted for this category in FY22 were to be articulated as specific investments through a planning process (see ‘External Funds’ section for further detail).

BPS OPERATING BUDGET

At a \$1.3 billion appropriation, the FY22 operating budget is the largest in BPS’s history (Table 2), despite a projected decline in student enrollment amidst recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The FY22 allocation makes investments to begin a multi-year effort to not only recover from COVID-19, but also transform the school district. The FY22 budget provides direct assistance to schools with declining enrollments in order to mitigate the negative impacts COVID-19 has had on school communities.

BPS Operating Budget Summary

	FY21 Adopted	FY22 Adopted	\$ Change
Direct School Expenses	\$809M	\$830M	\$21M
School Services Budgeted Centrally	\$317M	\$320M	\$4M
Central Administration	\$66M	\$73M	\$6M
Non-BPS Student Services	\$67M	\$71M	\$5M
Total BPS Budget	\$1.259B	\$1.295B	\$36M

Table 1

Funding going directly to schools will reach \$830.4 million for FY22, an increase of \$21.5 million from the FY21 adopted budget.

In addition to school budgets, schools receive significant support from services that are budgeted centrally. This includes

items such as transportation, particular special education services, and facilities maintenance. This portion of the budget will increase 1.1% from the FY21 adopted budget to \$320.3 million. With these support funds added to funds budgeted at the school level, \$1.15 billion is expected to be spent on school services, nearly 90% of the BPS budget.

BPS is also responsible for funding services for students in Boston attending school outside of BPS, including adult education students, students placed out-of-district for special education and vocational education, and pre-kindergarten students at community-based organizations. In addition, BPS provides transportation for out-of-district special education students, costs that comprise 23.7% of the FY22 BPS transportation budget. Total funds budgeted for non-BPS students will increase 7.1% from the FY21 adopted budget to \$71.4 million, comprising over 5.5% of the overall FY22 BPS budget.

In FY22, the Central Administration budget will increase by \$6.3 million to \$72.6 million. The Superintendent’s strategic vision affirms the importance of organizational effectiveness and accountability, as well as the need for strong coordination and support from district leadership.

FY22 is the second year of the City’s three-year, \$100 million education funding commitment. Alongside additional federal funding, the \$36 million in FY22 BPS operating investments will support children and their families not only through a return to school, but also in the years beyond. The FY22 BPS investments are guided by three principles: *Return*, *Recover*, and *Reimagine*. These investments focus on improving student outcomes, advancing equitable recovery, and promoting the school community’s health and wellness amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. 100% of

investments are directly in school budgets or school services budgeted centrally.

To prepare schools for a safe return, the FY22 operating budget devotes \$1.4 million to the addition of 20 daytime custodians to ensure cleanliness in school facilities.

The FY22 BPS budget also includes \$16.9 million to expand the FY21 investments in social workers and family liaisons. This additional funding will guarantee a social worker and family liaison in every school. Of the \$16.9 million, \$10 million will fund 95 new social workers to provide a coordinated, multi-tiered system of supports to meet the social-emotional needs of students and their families. This investment augments \$1.6 million in federal aid from the American Rescue Plan Act allocated to ensure that every school had a full time social worker, or equivalent.

Also included in the \$16.9 million is \$6.8 million in new funding for 80.5 additional family liaisons who reflect the cultures and speak the languages represented at schools in the communities they serve. In addition to helping families navigate registration and other school functions, liaisons will refer families to community resources for housing, food, and counseling. In FY21, 98% of family liaisons hired were people of color, and these individuals helped parents and caregivers navigate challenges presented by the pandemic. In the coming year, the new family liaisons will continue this urgent and necessary work.

Because COVID-19 has caused enrollment declines across the country, the FY22 operating budget includes additional supports to mitigate negative impacts COVID-19 has had on school communities. An \$18.5 million investment in school supports on top of existing soft landings and the Foundation for Quality is intended to ensure that schools are able to maintain level services and support their students, regardless of enrollment declines.

Early Childhood Education

Each year, the City continually expands the number of quality pre-kindergarten seats, as part of the Universal Pre-K (UPK) initiative. In April 2019, the City announced the creation of a first-of-its-kind \$15 million investment in the Quality Pre-K Fund to support the creation of a citywide mixed-delivery system with school-based programs and community-based organizations.

Because of this extraordinary investment, as well as ongoing operating support in BPS's Department of Early Childhood, in the 2021-2022 school year, up to 1,003 more four-year-olds will be enrolled in a quality pre-kindergarten program than when the UPK initiative began in FY14, two-thirds of the way toward the City's goal of 1,500. The Quality Pre-K Fund will enable the City to close the existing gap in quality seats, guaranteeing every four-year-old in Boston a high-quality pre-kindergarten experience.

BPS early education programs have been recognized as among the most effective in the nation at closing achievement gaps. They are content-rich in science, literacy, arts and math. Data shows that BPS pre-kindergarten attendees outperform their peers in third and fifth grade MCAS, in both ELA and Math. Two-thirds of BPS early childhood classrooms have earned accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), affirming that these programs offer high-quality, state-of-the-art education to help get children off to successful starts.

Special Education

The FY22 BPS budget makes robust investments in special education that will result in over 164 new school-budgeted special education teachers and

paraprofessionals. The special education budget totals roughly \$307 million in FY22, an increase of \$14.2 million, or 4.9%, from the FY21 adopted budget. The special education budget accounts for nearly 24% of the total BPS budget and supports the over 11,000 students with disabilities, or 21% of the BPS student population.

The significant increase in special education teachers in the FY22 budget tracks with the continued inclusion rollout across the district and into new grade levels. Another driver of the growth in staffing and spending is autism need. The FY22 budget includes a \$5.5 million, or 14%, increase in funding to support students with autism. With the new funding, budgeted personnel specializing in serving this population will increase by over 12% to 620. In FY22, BPS plans to dedicate \$5 million in ESSER II funds for interventions for students with disabilities that address the impact of COVID-19 on their learning and well-being.

In addition to mainstream or substantially separate placements in the district, BPS is responsible for the educational services of approximately 450 special education students in out-of-district placements. Over time, BPS has seen an increase in the number of high-need students and DCF-involved students placed in group homes who require private placement. BPS is fully or partly responsible for paying for services for most of these students, at a total projected cost of \$42.5 million in FY22. Some of the costs for these services will be reimbursed by Circuit Breaker. Tuition rates are established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Rate Setting Commission.

BPS is also responsible for providing education services to students with IEPs in private placements. To better support these students, the FY22 budget continues to fund a proportionate share team

responsible for conducting IEP meetings and evaluations.

English Learners

The Bilingual/Sheltered English Immersion budget totals \$103.8 million in FY22, an increase of \$2.7 million, or 2.6%, from the FY21 adopted budget. Nearly a third (31%) of BPS students has an ELL designation; as a group, they hail from 132 different countries and speak 70 languages.

Anticipating that these students will require targeted support to address COVID-19-related learning loss, BPS will devote \$2.25 million in ESSER II funds to interventions in FY22.

BPS Enrollment

Student enrollment is the foundation of the BPS budget. The preliminary stage of the budget process involves enrollment projections for each program, grade, and school, which are based on historic trends and current data. The projected enrollment at each school for the upcoming school year determines the allocation of resources at the school level through the weighted student funding formula. The FY22 budget development process continued the work done in prior years to use data more rigorously and collaborate between school leaders and BPS Finance to develop accurate enrollment projections.

BPS projected enrollment for FY22 is approximately 52,280. The change in FY22 represents the largest single-year decline in enrollment in the last 15 years, driven in part by uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite declining enrollment and decreasing salary and operational costs, BPS's budget will increase by almost \$1,700 per pupil, from approximately \$21,800 per pupil to \$23,500.

At the school level, BPS has seen some shifts in enrollment. BPS gives parents a voice in where their child attends schools,

which causes shifts from year to year. The BPS School Committee has also supported school communities that have requested to expand grades in recent years, which has led to shifts in enrollment.

Weighted Student Funding

Weighted Student Funding (WSF) ensures resource equity for all students no matter the school they attend. The weighted student funding model creates a baseline per-student funding amount and then adjusts the amount depending on individual student need. For example, students whose family income is at or below the poverty level will receive additional funding in the formula. Other needs-based weights include students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and vocational education students. A school's budget is calculated by adding the individual funding amounts for every student projected to attend that school in the fall. Additionally, each school also receives a foundation budget to support essential staff.

For FY22, the eleventh year using the WSF formula, BPS continues to refine this needs-based method of funding. Student-based allocation models are the standard for transparent and equitable school budgeting. Such models allow dollars to follow students, and those dollars are weighted based on student need. BPS's highest-need students receive more resources through the weighted student funding structure.

When enrollment declines at a school, the BPS central office works closely with the school to appropriately adjust staffing. Particular care is made through this process to make classrooms full so that they are affordable to schools. There are safeguards in place to assist schools with declines in enrollment, such as sustainability allocations and soft landings,

as well as other reserves that are used throughout the budgeting process.

In FY22, WSF funding is decreasing by \$24.3 million, to \$535.1 million. WSF is only one component of schools' funding; total school funding will rise by \$22.1 million in FY22.

BPS school budgets also include substantial supports on top of WSF. The Foundation for Quality, which replaces sustainability funds, expands the definition of baseline services for schools, ensuring that all schools have a baseline amount of funding above compliance. Schools in transition will receive additional targeted funding, including supports for K-6 transitions, new inclusion programs, strands undergoing redesign, and capacity maintenance for existing programs.

The Opportunity Index

FY22 is the fourth year that BPS will be using the Opportunity Index (OI) as part of WSF. The OI is an innovative tool that quantifies differences in experiences, opportunities, and need between students, allowing BPS to allocate resources more equitably. The OI is a composite index that incorporates a range of data representing factors that are outside of the schools' control, yet are predictive of students' academic outcomes. By rolling multiple measures into a single, more accessible metric ranging from 0.01 to 0.99, BPS is better equipped to direct resources and supports to the schools and students who need them most.

Since FY19, BPS has used OI for the allocation of two central sources of funding: School Support Funds, which support schools' academic priorities, and the Partnership Fund, which enables schools to partner with community nonprofit organizations. Funding is allocated based on student enrollment and level of need. In FY22, \$5 million in discretionary School Support Funds will be

awarded to schools with an OI score greater than or equal to 0.35. Additionally, \$5 million from the Partnership Fund will be awarded to schools with an OI score greater than or equal to 0.56.

EXTERNAL FUNDS

External funds are provided directly to BPS through formula grants (entitlements), competitive grants, reimbursement accounts, and other grants, primarily from state and federal sources. These external funds are critical to the success of the district, but have decreased to 9.9% of total funding in FY22 from 17% in FY12 (Figure 1). Decreased external funding was identified as a challenge to BPS’s long-term financial stability in the district’s 2016 Long-Term Financial Plan. In recent years, the BPS budget has relied on the increased City appropriation to help absorb these decreases.

One of the largest sources of federal revenue for BPS is the Title I entitlement grant. BPS expects to receive \$39 million in Title I revenue in FY22. The grant’s purpose is to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students by ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. The grant provides direct funds to schools with higher levels of poverty.

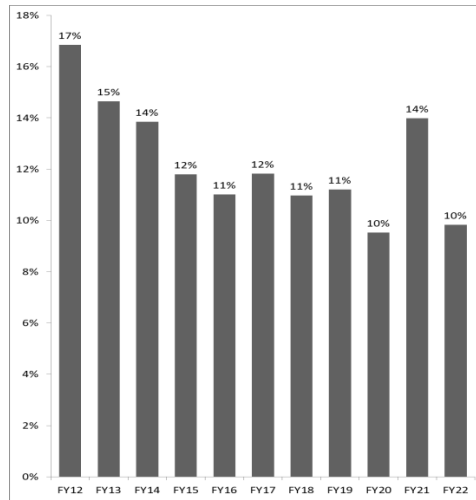


Figure 1
External Funds as % of Total Funds
FY12-20 Actuals, FY21 Appropriation, FY22 Adopted

BPS receives two external revenue sources to fund the district’s comprehensive special education program. Through Circuit Breaker reimbursements, the Commonwealth shares the cost of educating students with disabilities once the cost to educate those students exceeds a threshold amount. BPS has budgeted approximately \$18.1 million in Circuit Breaker revenue in FY22. Additionally, funds provided through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grant enable the district to provide special education services in the least restrictive environment possible for children with disabilities ages three through twenty-one, and to provide early intervention services for children from birth through age two. BPS expects to have \$19 million in IDEA funds available in FY22.

School Improvement Grants

In FY22, BPS will receive an estimated \$1.2 million from the Commonwealth through the combination of Targeted Assistance Grant funding and a School Redesign Grant for the Ellis. Targeted Assistance Grant funding is provided to the lowest

performing schools in BPS, also known as turnaround or transformation schools, to increase professional development, add staff, and provide other supports. In FY22, 35 BPS schools will be eligible for this funding.

As school improvement grants end for each school exiting turnaround status, the district shifts these activities to the operating budget to continue the work of turning around low-performing schools. The FY22 budget includes \$1.75 million in funding to transition the Channing, Grew, English, Brighton, Excel, Madison Park, and Winthrop schools, where previous school improvement grants have ended or funding is tapering.

Federal Relief Funding

In FY21, the sharp increase in the percentage of external funds as a share of total BPS funds (Figure 1) reflects COVID-19 relief funding, including a federal ESSER I grant. As detailed earlier, BPS is slated to receive \$123 million in ESSER II funding in FY22 to aid in recovery from COVID-19. BPS also expects to receive \$276 million in ESSER III funding through the American Rescue Plan Act in a later phase. The \$400 million in total new ESSER funding will be spent according to a three-year plan developed with input from students, families, educators, staff, and community members. (Note that because ESSER II and ESSER III funding have yet to be formally disbursed, the district's ESSER II and III awards are not included in Figure 1 or in the FY22 external fund data in Volume II.) In FY22 ESSER II funding will be tapped to make a series of investments within the *Return, Recover, and Reimagine* framework.

PERFORMANCE

BPS is committed to using data to improve school performance and provide the best education to students. In FY21, the district

created a new performance management system based on the six anchor goals articulated in the Superintendent's strategic vision: eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, accelerate learning, amplify all voices, expand opportunity, cultivate trust, and activate partnerships. Each goal is paired with a series of aligned metrics to measure progress.

BPS has been evaluating its progress towards academic goals using measurable outcomes for several years. The district has seen positive gains in several performance metrics, including increases in graduation rates and decreases in dropout rates.

Graduation Rates

The overall four-year graduation rate for the BPS class of 2020 was 75.4%, a 3% increase over the 2019 rate and the highest ever recorded by BPS. The graduation rate has increased by 17% over the past decade, from 64.4% in 2011.

In 2020, sixteen Boston high schools achieved graduation rates of 80% or above: the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science, Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy, Fenway High School, New Mission High School, TechBoston Academy, Boston Arts Academy, Boston Community Leadership Academy, Mary Lyon Pilot High School, Another Course to College, East Boston High School, English High School, Snowden International School at Copley, Boston Green Academy, and Margarita Muniz Academy.

Dropout Rate

The overall dropout rate for grades 9-12 in 2020 was 3.9%, a 7% decrease from the 2019 dropout rate of 4.2%. BPS has cut the dropout rate by 39% over the past ten years, with a decrease of 548 students dropping out annually over that period.

According to state guidelines, students in grades 6-12 are counted as dropouts if they leave school during the year for any reason other than transfer, graduation, death, or expulsion with an option to return.

Accountability Results

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) implemented a new accountability system in the fall of 2018, which determines schools' need for assistance or intervention based on a set of accountability indicators including student growth, graduation rate, and chronic absenteeism.

Due to the cancellation of state assessments related to COVID-19, DESE did not issue accountability determinations in 2020. In 2019, DESE singled out the Hale and Winship as schools of recognition. Fourteen schools were classified as meeting or exceeding targets, and thirty-five were classified as making substantial progress toward targets. 67% of schools improved relative to 2018 performance. BPS met English language arts, math, and science targets for all students in grades 3-8, and many schools showed strong progress against targets.

In March 2020, as the result of a district review by DESE, BPS and DESE entered into a partnership to improve the district's lowest performing schools, continue to address systemic barriers to equity across the school system, and support its most vulnerable students to achieve their highest educational potential.

As part of that partnership, BPS has committed to four priority initiatives: make improvements in BPS schools included among the lowest performing 10% of schools in the state; address instructional rigor, equitable access to advanced coursework, and chronic absenteeism at the high school level; improve educational services for students with disabilities; and improve on-time arrival of school buses. BPS has also committed to a long-term initiative to develop a plan for improving services to English learners and improve interpretation and translation services for limited English proficient parents and guardians.

The City will continue to work with state and community partners to make more improvements in our schools across the board.

BUILDBPS

In FY18, the City launched BuildBPS, a \$1 billion investment to modernize Boston's

public school infrastructure. Through a dedication of City capital funds and a strong working relationship with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), the plan more than doubles the capital spending on BPS facilities from FY18 to FY27.

This ten-year investment is the largest school building plan in forty years. The plan will result in new school buildings and major transformations, reconfigurations to align schools with K-6/7-12 and K-8/9-12 pathways, and increased investments district-wide for all school buildings and communities. The planning process is focused on creating high-quality, twenty-first-century learning environments for students, which contributes to closing opportunity gaps for more students.

Since FY18, BPS has completed construction on the new building for the Dearborn STEM Academy and the Eliot School at 585 Commercial Street. Boston Arts Academy is currently in construction. The Josiah Quincy Upper School is slated to begin construction in FY22, and the Carter School is currently in the process for MSBA funding. In FY22, the City will begin studying programming and siting for future elementary schools, including a new elementary school in East Boston. In addition, BPS will pursue building improvements to facilitate grade reconfigurations at various schools, including the McCormack and Irving Schools, in line with the goals of BuildBPS.

The City will continue FY21 districtwide investments in window replacements, bathroom upgrades, fire systems, radiator covers, entryway improvements, and plumbing and fixture upgrades to expand drinking water availability. The City is also investing in new school maintenance initiatives to increase building accessibility, upgrade auditoriums, and improve building interiors and exterior grounds, as well as

the fourth phase of the multi-year kitchen upgrade initiative. Additionally, the City will continue annual programs for school yards, security improvements, and technology infrastructure, as well as leveraging the MSBA Accelerated Repair Program to fund roof, window, and boiler repairs.

The FY22-26 capital plan sustains ongoing BuildBPS initiatives and supports planning for large-scale projects coming out of the BuildBPS engagement process. The City is projected to spend \$218 million on BuildBPS capital projects from FY18 through FY21. The FY22-26 capital plan projects \$468 million in City spending over the next five years, and the City has committed an additional \$43 million for the remainder of the ten-year plan. When combined with projected MSBA matching funds, Boston is committing \$1 billion to BPS capital projects over ten years.

CHARTER SCHOOL TUITION

Commonwealth charter schools, which are granted charters by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, are publicly-funded schools administered independently from local school districts and district bargaining rules and regulations. Commonwealth charter schools are primarily financed by each student's sending district through per-pupil-based tuition.

Commonwealth charter schools are projected to educate approximately 11,244 Boston students in FY22. Boston is assessed by the Commonwealth to fund charter schools on a per-pupil basis, and the City's charter school tuition assessment is projected to increase by \$31.8 million over FY21 to a total of nearly \$247 million due to increasing enrollment and higher per-pupil tuition rates.

As of FY21, Boston's charter school assessment has more than tripled since the enactment of the 2010 Achievement Gap

legislation. This has put increasing pressure on the City to fund education, as overall state support decreased for charter school tuition costs. However, thanks to the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) passed in 2019, Boston and other municipalities across the Commonwealth will see an increase in state education aid. The SOA will make an unprecedented \$1.5 billion investment in Massachusetts public schools, and provides an implementation timeline for fully funding charter school reimbursement costs. Due to COVID-19, the first year of SOA funding has been delayed to FY22.

See the *Revenue Estimates and Analysis* section of Volume I for more details on state education aid, charter school tuition reimbursement, and the SOA.