

**FY 2020 Budget Questions & Answers - Part 2**  
**Westford Public Schools**

Dept. Number, Name + Account	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
School Department		
300 - Education		
300 Reductions	<p>Koehr: If WPS is forced to adhere to the allocation suggested by the Town Manager (level services), it would be useful to see a prioritized list of where WPS would absorb the reductions. I know a list of what is driving the increase was provided, but SC might choose to take cuts elsewhere if forced to live within TM budget recommendation.</p>	<p>A prioritized list of proposed reductions was presented to the School Committee on 1/10/19, and is attached (Attachments II-1). It is important to note that the Town Manager's recommended FY20 school system appropriation does not allow for level services to be maintained in the school system. In the past 10 years, the WPS has received the following increases to cover the costs of educating Westford's students:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;"> FY11: 3.2%  FY12: 2.5%  FY13: 2.8%  FY14: 3.5%  FY15: 4.6%  FY16: 3.9%  FY17: 2.5%  FY18: 3.4% (2.5% increase and 0.9% from override)  FY19: 2.6% (1.7% increase and 0.9% from override)  FY20: 2.5% (1.6% increase and 0.9% from override) </p> <p>See the WPS General Fund Appropriation history (Attachment II-2).</p>

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<p>300 – Override/Salaries</p>	<p>Clay: The override was designed to only cover the excess beyond a 1.5% salary increase within steps and the step progression. It would be a useful number to have on hand so we can see how much of the non-override 1.6% budget increase is eaten up by required compensation changes alone. How much increased funding would be required just to support the existing staffing levels?</p>	<p>The Superintendent’s carryforward/level services budget of \$59,959,324 supports existing WPS staffing levels. This budget is \$511,995 over the 1.6% increase budget allocation from the Town Manager. 1.6% is inadequate to fund level-service school department operations.</p> <p>FY20 is the second year WPS has been given a 1.6% increase outside the override amount. In order to reach this target in FY19, WPS designated \$363,552 in FY19 Circuit Breaker funds to be used in FY19 instead of FY20, reduced staff, raised bus fees, reduced the long-term substitute budget, and pre-paid FY19 out-of-district tuitions with year-end FY18 funds. For full cuts, see FY2019 Reductions to meet Town Manager’s Target (Attachment II-3).</p>
<p>300 WPS</p>	<p>Clay: It sounds like the amount forecasted in building the override was not enough to cover the reality of the teacher population mix under the existing contract. I think I've heard a summary number of the difference, but I'd be interested in Dan/Kathy's analysis of where our forecast model used in the override differs from the reality of our compensation cost. If the teacher mix is different than we thought, generating additional cost beyond what the override collected, it would be good to know.</p>	<p>With Dan O’Donnell, we pulled the FY18 actual teacher payroll, FY19 anticipated teacher payroll, and projected out FY20 teacher payroll based on current employees. As noted at the time of the initial override calculations, the 400+ teachers in the Westford Public Schools are a fluid and dynamic group, with many factors contributing to payroll changes. Factors include: Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), retirements, replacement hires, new hires due to specific student need, and column changes. In FY18 and year-to-date in FY19, there have been almost 40 column changes (teacher education credits which move teachers from a Bachelors level to Masters or from Masters to Masters +30). Using the average of column change levels, the 40 changes increased teacher payroll by approximately \$200,000.</p>

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<p>300 – Close-outs</p>	<p>Clay: I'd be interested in the dollar amount of the school department turn backs for the past 5 years. To the degree possible it would also be helpful to know which department line items ended up being over budgeted such that a turn back was possible.</p> <p>I believe the primary source of turn back monies is from the compensation budgets, but it would be interesting to know.</p>	<p>The Quarter 4 Fiscal Reports for FY14 to FY18 are attached (Attachments II-5 to II-9), as well as a WPS closeout summary (II-4). These reports show the details that comprise the final balances in each state function.</p> <p>The FY19 2nd Quarter Fiscal Update provides a current snapshot of YTD FY19 (Attachment II-19).</p>
<p>300 – Growth</p>	<p>Galvin: In the Superintendent's budget summary please clarify the \$935K expenditure in FY20 for "new growth requests for statutory requirements, growth and reconfigured school start times."</p>	<p>The \$935,093 requests are detailed in the Superintendent's Budget Presentation (Attachment II-10), as follows:</p> <p>FY20 cost for 2.5 FTE Teachers required in FY19 and FY20 (\$197,642)</p> <p>FY20 cost for contracted-out special ed transportation required in FY19 and FY20 (\$160,000)</p> <p>FY20 additional funds for full year salary of town-wide facility director and admin assistant (\$65,147)</p> <p>3.0 FTE General Ed contingency teaching positions (\$179,289)</p> <p>1.0 FTE Special Ed contingency teaching position (\$59,763)</p> <p>2 additional regular ed buses for growth (\$125,252)</p>

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		3 additional vans and 4.0 FTE van staff to enable the district to move to a reconfigured 2-tier start time (\$148,000)
	Miller: A pre-first option has been well regarded by students and their families in the past, however could the academic needs of these students be accommodated in another, possibly more cost-efficient way? For example, could these students could receive additional academic supports in a first grade classroom or could a pre-first class be combined with a full-day kindergarten class?	The referral to the pre-first program has been due to maturation issues. Most students are meeting academic expectations. If needed, we will provide additional guidance/adjustment counselor support to the identified students in grade 1.
	<b>School Choice &amp; Circuit Breaker</b>	
300 - School Choice	FitzPatrick/ \$200k from school choice is shown as a budget offset. What is the total offset from school choice? Is it anticipated that school choice would increase as enrollment increases?	The school choice program allows parents to send their children to schools in communities other than the city or town in which they reside. Tuition is paid through the state by the sending district to the receiving district. Districts may elect not to enroll school choice students. Our total school choice budget offset (i.e. reductions that have been made to the operating budget by shifting costs to the School Choice account instead) is approximately \$600,000 for FY20, which includes the additional \$200,000 that is proposed in the Superintendent’s FY20 budget request. We will not be increasing our school choice enrollment due to the anticipated enrollment increase for newly constructed housing units. See Attachments II-11 & II-12.
300 - School Choice	Miller: How is school choice used? Parameters? What paid for in past?	A schedule of expenditures that have been charged to School Choice in recent years is provided. See Attachments II-11 & II-12.

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300 - School Choice	Greene: Budget Offset from School Choice is \$200K. Can you please give the math behind this calculation?	Please see School Choice schedules and answers to preceding questions. See Attachments II-11 & II-12.
300 – School Choice	Galvin: Please explain how “School Choice Funds” are being used to “offset salaries and operating costs”?	Please see School Choice schedules and answers to preceding questions. See Attachments II-11 & II-12.
300 – Circuit Breaker	Galvin: The Superintendent referenced in his budget summary the fact that “Circuit Breaker” funds are “variable”. Can you provide a more extended explanation? Is the reimbursement program reliable?	The Circuit Breaker reimbursement program is annually funded but the percentage of reimbursement of “excess costs”, that is costs that are in excess of 4 times the per-pupil foundation budget amount, is always “subject to state appropriation”. The percentage rate has ranged between 65% to 75% in recent years. See Attachment II-13.
300 – SPED Reserve	Galvin: Has the new law that allows the schools to retain their allocation for SPEDs been implemented, and if so, can you explain what impact that has had on the SPED budget?	At town meeting last March 2018 voters approved the establishment of the Special Education Reserve Account. We presently have a balance of \$92,000. It can only be used for special education costs. In order to use the reserve fund, the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen must vote to release the funds.
300 - School Choice/Circuit Breaker	Eckroth: I think it would be helpful to have a clearer breakdown of how much we chose to “dip into” school choice and circuit breaker to meet budget needs (for FY19 and FY20).	<p>We have had to increase the planned offsets to both the School Choice and the Circuit Breaker accounts in recent years due to operating budget constraints. Though the actual FY20 out-of-district tuition projection is higher than the FY19 budget amount, we have not increased the FY20 budget request in that line, but rather plan to use more of the current year (FY20) Circuit Breaker receipts to pay expenses for FY20. A schedule has been provided that summarizes the past and projected balances in the Circuit Breaker account (Attachment II-13).</p> <p>Please also see the schedules that have been provided for the School Choice account. (Attachments II-11 &amp; II-12).</p>

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	<b>School Enrollment</b>	
300 – Enrollment/ School Capacity	Miller: Enrollment data for Jan. 1. For middle schools, details on teams, average class size. For HS: class enrollment data (high and low enrolled classes). Lower-enrollment electives?	The January 1, 2019 enrollment data was included in Part 1 of attachments on 1/4/19 and is included again as Attachment II-14.
300 – Enrollment/ School Capacity	Miller: Do the middle and high schools have excess capacity to absorb the anticipated development growth?	Without any additional development growth or in-migration, the high school would remain at the current student population (1716) as the current 8th grade class equals the graduating senior class (444).
300 – Enrollment	Galvin: In the student projection that was offered, is the net increase in students between 2019 and 2020 about 41?	Yes, the projections include slightly higher cohort ratios for Robinson and Crisafulli due to residential development in this district. The Blanchard Middle School and Westford Academy might also see increased enrollment, though that is not currently in the projections. Already in this 2018-19 school year, we have added a net of 13 students since October 1, 2018.
300 – Enrollment/SPED expenses	Vetsa: I like to see the year to year growth in the following categories for the last 5 years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pupil population</li> <li>2. Teacher population</li> <li>3. Special Education enrollment</li> <li>4. Dollar spend in Special Education spending</li> </ul>	See Attachment II-15: WPS Student and Staff Population attachment  While there are some categories in the WPS budget that are readily identifiable as a Special Education expense, there are 441 (58%) full inclusion students some of whose educational needs are being met in general education classrooms. A majority of our teachers have responsibility for meeting some less-intensive special education needs.
300 – Enrollment/SPED	Vetsa: In the last 5 years, the school enrollment is relatively flat (graph from slide 15), while special	There has certainly been an increase in the number of students receiving special education services in recent years, and corresponding increases in staff, contracted

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	education enrollment went up 575 – 756 (approx. 5% a year). If we plot the graphs side by side, it doesn't take a lot to see these graphs. Are we seeing a dollar cost and % of school budget increase in special ed?	services, support services, transportation, tuition, etc. DESE provided information on their website for each district's direct special education expenditures compared to the state through reporting year FY15, but has discontinued doing so. There are some special education costs that are difficult if not impossible to quantify, such as the portion of a general ed teacher's salary that could be allocated to each student in an inclusion classroom. (see preceding question)
300 – Enrollment/FTEs	Almeida: total school enrollment figures for past 10 years with total teacher FTEs and other administrator/all other school employees FTEs	Please see the WPS Student and Staff Population attachment (Attachment II-15).
	<b>Student-Teacher Ratio/Staffing</b>	
300 - Student-Teacher Ratio/Staffing	Eckroth: One request (when possibly discussing class ratios) is to have up-to-date enrollment totals for all K-5 classrooms. I know at least at Abbot two of the 4th grade classrooms are quite high now, 23+. I'm sure Bill is aware and accounting for the growth but knowing where we are district wide would be helpful.	The January 1, 2019 enrollment spreadsheet was presented to the School Committee on 1/10/19 and is included in the attachments (II-14).
300 - Student-Teacher Ratio/Staffing	Bao: It appears that we have total 308.7 "CLASSROOM TEACHERS". Of which, 195.2 teachers are from Westford Academy + Stony Brook + Blanchard, and 113.5 teachers are from ROB+NAB+Miller+Crisafulli+Abbot+Day. We have about 2949 students from 6 to 12 and 2003 students from K to 5. Some of the "CLASSROOM TEACHERS" are not counted as part of the Student-to-teacher ratio, e.g. health, digital learning, physical, etc.	There are professional teaching staff in multiple lines of the budget in addition to "Function 2305 Classroom teachers". Salaries are included in the following functions: 2305: Classroom Teachers 2310: Teacher Specialists 2315: Instructional Coordinators/Team Leaders 2320: Medical/Therapeutic Services 2340: Library/Media Center 2357: Professional Development

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	What's our current student-to-teacher ratio?	<p>2710: Guidance and Adjustment Counselors                  2800: Psychological Services</p> <p>The student/teacher ratio is calculated only considering the number of students in a single class with their respective teacher since the individual classroom is the focal point of each student's primary instruction.</p> <p>The student teacher ratio is noted on the January 1, 2019 enrollment spreadsheet attached (II-14). This ratio only considers a classroom teacher with his/her respective class. It does not take into consideration any specialist who will provide services outside of a child's normal classroom setting.</p>
300 - Student-Teacher Ratio/Staffing	Sanders: Staffing: each school and department needs to provide an accounting of staffing, responsibilities, student ratios, and justifications. I think Blanchard had a librarian, a STEM teacher, and a technology teacher. There is some overlap there, it would seem.	Please see 1-1-19 Enrollment (Attachment II-14) for the most up-to-date enrollment statistics per school/grade/classroom as well as the WPS FTEs by Location attachment (Attachment II-18). Specifically regarding this question at Blanchard, while all three teachers have technology integration skills, their content knowledge skills and areas of responsibility are different.
300 - FTEs	FitzPatrick/ in previous years we've seen a line chart for FTEs. Is it available this year?	The FTE chart is attached (Attachment II-16). Also see attachment WPS Student and Staff Population (II-15).
300 – FTEs	Almeida: Can you provide a breakdown of number of students per grade level and number of FTE teachers per grade level every year from 2009 – till now	Please see attachments: WPS Student and Staff Population (II-15); WPS Enrollment FY2010-2019 (II-17).
300 – FTEs	Clay: understanding headcount at schools with corresponding enrollment across entire school system	Please see attachments: FY20 FTEs per Location (II-18); WPS Student and Staff Population (II-15); 1-1-19 Enrollment (II-14).



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	<b>Transportation</b>	
300-Transportation	Eckroth: Is there a possibility that if the new bus contract includes the provision of a wheelchair accessible “regular” bus that a student who currently requires van service could instead be serviced by a regular bus route?	At this point we don’t plan to ask for wheelchair accessible buses as a part of the regular ed transportation contract. This would be more costly and difficult to implement for a variety of reasons, including the need to add a monitor to ride with the student to help with boarding and exiting, the need to condense routes and possibly add more buses to allow for the extra time it would take to board and exit, traffic concerns related to the extra time needed for the stop, how to address equity if there are more students in wheelchairs that wanted to ride these specially equipped buses than we can accommodate, etc.
	Galvin: In the assessment that was done on new housing units in town, does the School Department view the number of 3 bedroom apartments as the more reliable indicator of children in a residence ?	No, as seen at the Princeton Properties, there are 85 current students residing in the 176 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units. The student distribution from this development is: Preschool: 3 students Gr. K-5: 36 students Gr. 6-8: 26 students Gr. 9-12: 20 students