

FY 2020 Budget Questions & Answers - Part 3
Westford Public Schools

Dept. Number, Name + Account	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
300 - WPS	<p>FitzPatrick: I expected your answer to be the conclusion to my question of comparing out sourcing vs bringing busing in house. (your answer: Many years ago I was a member of a citizens advisory committee that studied various models for providing bus transportation under difficult fiscal conditions. The committee determined that contracting with a private bus company was in the best financial interest of the town. Yes, the equipment can be bonded but employee salaries, a vehicle maintenance function, insurances (health and liability coverage, worker’s compensation) can be very costly to the operating budget. Assignment of risk (liability) is also a very important issue with school bus transportation.) My follow up question is why is there any busing in house?</p>	<p>We have operated our own fleet of vans for special ed transportation for many years, and realized significant savings during that time. Small minivans can be leased relatively inexpensively and have served us well. In recent years, since we have needed to outsource some of our routes due to the limitations of our current fleet, we have seen first-hand how costly this can be. We plan to undertake a study to see if it would be less costly and/or more efficient to outsource the entire special ed transportation operation, but since we are operating with 3-year leases on the vans, with varying lease end dates, we plan to continue under current parameters for next year.</p>
300 - WPS	<p>FitzPatrick: Please confirm the 44 page FY20 budget has FY 19 numbers for administrators and line 1420 accounts for the summer increases. Are any EE groups included in the comp reserve. At the recent school committee meeting it was stated that the administrator increase was 135 and the only other unsettled contract was with the school secretaries. The [compensation reserve] budget in FY19 was 11K and FY20 is \$261K. Please provide a roll forward of the compensation reserve account for the last 5 years and how this transaction flows thru.</p>	<p>The FY19 salaries for administrators and other exempt staff are included in the FY20 budget in their respective state functions. There is an increment in the Compensation Reserve account in Function 1420 for a COLA increase for FY20 for these individuals. There are several bargaining units that are not settled for FY20 at this point in time, and therefore the Comp Reserve includes an increment for those units as well (school secretaries, custodians/maintenance staff, teaching assistants, van staff). The only bargaining unit that remains unsettled for FY19 at this point in time is the school secretaries.</p>

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		<p>The original comp reserve budget for FY19 was \$2,165,607. At the point in time when the FY19 budget was prepared (last fall/winter) most bargaining units were not settled for FY19, which is the reason for such a large amount in the original FY19 Comp Reserve (Unit A (teachers),B,C,G, school secretaries, central office support, exempt). As those contracts were settled later last year, budget transfers were made from the comp reserve line in Function 1420 to the appropriate state function.</p> <p>Comp Reserve Summaries:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1270 722 1921 1226"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Original Comp Reserve</th> <th>Closeout FY15-FY18 / FY19 current bal</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>FY19</td> <td>2,165,607</td> <td>11,088</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY18</td> <td>742,446</td> <td>21,396</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY17</td> <td>360,978</td> <td>42,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY16</td> <td>264,765</td> <td>36,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY15</td> <td>1,167,686</td> <td>173,631</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Original Comp Reserve	Closeout FY15-FY18 / FY19 current bal	FY19	2,165,607	11,088	FY18	742,446	21,396	FY17	360,978	42,000	FY16	264,765	36,000	FY15	1,167,686	173,631
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300 - WPS	FitzPatrick: What is it the determination that the new facilities position needs an admin??	The administrative position was determined to be necessary during the planning phase with the town for the new facilities director.																		

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300 - WPS	FitzPatrick: An answer was provided that food service is self supporting. Is that on a fully allocated basis, which includes health insurance and post retirement benefits?	No, health insurance and post retirement benefits for the food service staff are not funded by the school lunch fees.
300 - WPS	FitzPatrick: Are any of the school spaces that are used for town committees set up for the meetings to be televised?	Meetings in the Millennium Building can be broadcasted from conference room B using installed camera equipment or from the all purpose room using Westford CAT's mobile recording systems. Other spaces in school buildings, such as auditoriums, could be used for televised meetings if Westford CAT is able to deploy mobile equipment.
300 - WPS	FitzPatrick: Why can parking fees only be used for parking related costs and not transportation as a whole. Would it discourage drivers if the parking fee went up and the transportation bus fee was closer thus alleviating the congestion and improving safety.	Funds deposited into revolving accounts can only be used for the purpose for which the fee was collected. While we may be able to charge additional maintenance or personnel indirect costs to the account if parking fees were increased, using parking fees to pay for other students' transportation costs would not be an eligible expenditure.
300 - WPS	FitzPatrick: do any school choice children receive special services?	<p>Yes, some of the school choice students receive special education services. These students are entitled to the same services as any other student in the District, including the recommendation for an out-of-district placement. Each spring the District submits a School Choice report to DESE. This report includes the total number of school choice students receiving special education services within the district.</p> <p>The 2017-2018 School Choice Claim Form reported 72 overall students. Of those 72 students, 11 received special education services. The total claim for special education services was \$183,445, which was added to the regular school choice claim.</p>

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300 - WPS	<p>Almeida: Please explain the positions of Reading Specialist & Reading Interventionist. At the SC meeting on 1/10/19, Ms. Clery stated that each person sees 40 students. This would be 160 students per school. Does this mean half of our K-5 students need extra reading support? How does this compare with other schools or metrics for best practices? Also, the positions being cut are listed as FTE, but the total for 6 people is \$123k. This isn't even minimum wage. How many hours do these positions work and how much are they paid?</p>	<p>Literacy specialists (LS) are licensed reading specialists. Due to their expertise, they see the most struggling general education students (considered <i>well</i> below benchmark). Due to the needs of their caseload, their groups are a smaller ratio. These staff members are full time and are on the Unit A salary scale.</p> <p>Reading Interventionists (RI) are hired to work with students who are below benchmark. These staff members are in Unit G, and are paid an hourly rate, starting at \$19.10/hour. The RIs work part time: in grades 3-5 they work five hours per day and those in grades K-2 work four hours per day. We refer to them as full FTE's because the position is defined as a four-or five hour position. The six positions in the reductions are RIs (not LSSs), which adds up to \$123,000.</p> <p>Each RI has about 20 students at a given time and may work with up to about 40 students each year because it is fluid. While some students are serviced by an RI all year, others are added to and released from their caseloads throughout the year.</p> <p>The percentage of students on the RI and LS caseloads is approximately 19%. For example, last year 380 students of the 2,014 were on caseload.</p>
300 - WPS	<p>Almeida: What is our capacity for new students? What is the threshold for adding new teachers? If we get 100 new students and use the rough estimates from Princeton for the breakdown of grade level, that will be 50 at the K-5 level, 25 at the MS, and 25 at the HS. Approximately how much capacity do we have at each level, K-2, 3-5, MS, and HS. It was mentioned that a half team is being kept at</p>	<p>Once we complete redistricting in SY2020-21, our schools' capacity should be able to accommodate the initial growth in student enrollment due to the 722 new housing units. As we have been informed by Westford's Director of Land Use Management and Town Planner, we should anticipate that the first 240</p>

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	<p>Blanchard in anticipation of this growth. Having this information now will prepare us for a decision at Fall Town Meeting to fund additional teachers.</p>	<p>units could be occupied this year between April-December 2019. If the growth reaches a point that the schools are no longer able to absorb the higher enrollment, the Millenium Building could be turned into an Early Childhood Center to accommodate Preschool and Kindergarten.</p> <p>In the short-term, we will do our best to accommodate all our students keeping in mind that the Robinson, Crisafulli, and Blanchard schools, as well as Westford Academy, could experience some capacity stress.</p>
300 - WPS	<p>Almeida: Could Mike Wells please weigh in on the need for an additional Tech Support person if the Digital Learning positions are cut? Will we need an additional person?</p>	<p>From Mike Wells: The extra Tech is in response to the expected increase in calls. Even though they were largely non-technical we relied on the DLSs to do “triage” on issues that arose in those schools. That avoided us even being involved in some cases as the solutions were very straightforward. In addition, we can no longer use those people as “remote hands” if we need them, so we are expecting to have to go to those buildings more often than we have in the past. Given that Gail Anselmetti, my most senior technician, is the technician who covers the elementary grades and would have to make those trips, it is going to be highly disruptive to her and she is already overworked.</p>
300 - WPS	<p>Almeida: (I may have sent this already.) From the numbers, it looks like we’ve added 80 new FTE’s in the past ten years, an average of 8 per year. Where are we adding these positions?</p>	<p>The FTEs added annually are added to address specific student need and were outlined every year during the budget process and for Annual Town Meeting vote. In most years there are FTE reductions as well as additions to continually reflect current student and programmatic needs. (Detail is provided in Attachment III-2 FTE Summary and Detail)</p>

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300 - WPS	Ross/Almeida: Total school enrollment figures for past 10 years with total teacher FTEs and other administrator/all other school employees FTEs.	We provided data for 5 years in Attachment II-15 on 1/16/19. Data for the additional 5 years has been added. Attachment: III-1 WPS Student Enrollment 10 years.
300 - WPS	Vetsa: Is there a way you can send us a spreadsheet, which allows us to deduct non-teaching staff?	Please see Attachment III-2 FTE Summary and Detail.
300 - WPS	Vetsa: What is the difference between Total WPS FTEs (general fund) and Total WPS FTEs (all funds)?	Almost 100 FTEs are funded outside of the general fund. For example, 50 cafeteria workers are funded by students' lunch payments through the School Lunch Revolving Account; 19.1 FTE through federal grants for Special Education; Preschool and Kindergarten fees pay for TA's and professional staff in the programs. See Attachment II-16 FTE Summary FY09 to FY20 Super Budget from 1-16-19. Attachment III-2 FTE Summary and Detail.
300 - WPS	Greene: There are several smaller line items which are budgeted much higher than FY18 actuals. Please explain. Specific examples are: Supt Office Supplies (FY18 \$498, FY20 \$3,000), Supt Food (FY18 \$1,243 FY20 \$2,000), Curriculum Other General Supplies (FY18 \$304 FY20 \$3,000), Curriculum Reg Elem Coordinator Discretionary (FY18 \$2,901 FY20 \$12,000), many of the individual schools office supplies, general supplies, and mtg/conf allowance items.	<p><u>Supt Office Supplies (1210)</u> - office supplies that are purchased specifically for the Superintendent's office are charged to this account. The need varies every year, but we have kept the budgeted amount constant at \$3,000 to allow the Superintendent the ability to purchase what is needed.</p> <p><u>Supt Food (1210)</u> - food/refreshments that are purchased for meetings with outside individuals and/or occasional staff meetings are charged to this account. The need varies every year, but we have kept the budgeted amount constant at \$2,000 to allow the Superintendent the ability to purchase what is needed.</p> <p><u>Curric Reg Other Genl Supplies (2110)</u> - this budgeted \$3,000 is for any unanticipated needs from the curriculum. For example, our ELL students are</p>

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		<p>welcome to have a translation dictionary, translating words in their first language to English. Purchases such as these are hard to anticipate so these funds are set aside for those types of situations.</p> <p><u>Curric Reg Elem Coord Discretionary (2110)</u> - each year the three elementary curriculum coordinators are given a discretionary budget of \$4K to use as curriculum needs arise throughout the year. Last year the spending appears low (\$2,901) due to the budget freeze that the Superintendent instituted in FY18, along with the fact that some of this discretionary money was spent in other areas and therefore shows up in a line other than this one (e.g. professional development for example).</p> <p>As noted above, many of the accounts show low FY18 actuals due to the spending freeze instituted in FY18. The Superintendent instituted another spending freeze in December 2018 for FY19.</p>
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