

Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District



Proposed FY18 Operating Budget

Executive Summary



“Together, better than apart!”

January 24, 2017

Dear AWRSD School Committee and ASHWEST Residents:

I am pleased to present to you an Executive Summary of the FY18 Superintendent's Recommended Budget. This document is a "big-picture" overview, but one that also provides detailed explanations of our budget requests. It is written in plain, concise, and simplified language, as requested at a recent school committee meeting, so that any Ashburnham or Westminster resident can read it and fully understand the school budget. I hope you find it easy to understand as this budget was developed to provide a high level of transparency during the budget process.

My initial budget request which calls for an 8.1% increase over FY17 is for a prioritized budget. This keeps everything for FY18 that is currently in place and adds things that are the largest priorities to the school district. Last year there was a 0.6% decrease in the overall budget which resulted in a reduction in services that included staff, loss of programming, athletics, and extra-curricular activities. We cannot continue on this trajectory moving forward. We have felt the effects of larger class sizes, reduction of available sections at the high school level and loss of athletics and extra-curricular that have resulted in numerous fundraising activities and donations to keep some intact. In addition, our technology infrastructure has started to erode as we do not have any available funds to replace outdated equipment or improve bandwidth and wireless capabilities within each of our school buildings.

The enclosed executive summary explains why the need for what I refer to as a "**PRIORITIZED BUDGET.**" This budget restores not only what has been recently lost, but instead, **WHAT IS NEEDED.** It also includes necessary funding for those staff, programs, and extra-curricular activities that are so vital for our students lives and to prosper in a very competitive global economy.

During my initial introduction to you, I stated that in the absence of a plan, I would not recommend any future funding requests unless I studied the district's problems and difficulties, assess what is happening within the current school budget and state funding constraints and assemble a district-wide strategic planning committee to ensure that what precious and limited dollars would be utilized to their fullest potential. **AshWest 2021: A Continuous, Strategic Learning Plan** was presented and approved by the AWRSD School Committee on January 10, 2017. Contained within the plan are recommendations and goals that not only improve what is currently happening in the school district, but provide necessary services, programs, and materials to keep us competitive, as well as ensure that we are meeting the needs of our 21st century learners.

Schools should be a top priority. It is a principle that is shared by many residents of Ashburnham and Westminster. The status and performance of your district's schools are what drives the home values in these communities. Many of you have moved to these towns for *our* schools! Your schools are the treasure of these communities and they need adequate funding. Unfortunately the state has much more work to do in adequately funding our schools and the future remains uncertain.

This is an exciting time in the Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District. You are the gem of central Massachusetts when it comes to schooling. However, in order for our students to perform well academically, be well-prepared for college and career readiness, and continue to participate in optimal arts and athletics programs, we must think about what is **NEXT?**

The Executive Summary outlines the PRIORITIZED BUDGET for the AWRSD. It's overall cost is an increase of 8.1%. When you look at the growth of this school district over the past nine years, the school budget has decreased by an average of -0.16% per year. Considering that the cost of living has realized growth between .70 and 3.0% in EACH of the past 8 years, it is unrealistic that our schools can continue at the current rate.

The strategic plan works to address what we want for our students in the next 5 years. Our school district has performed well, but is at a moment in time where I have considered the feedback and data that I have gathered as a part of the entry-planning process and realized that we are at a crossroads to continue to thrive without adequate funding.

I encourage you to access our approved strategic plan, ***AshWest 2021: A Continuous, Strategic Learning Plan*** online at: www.awrsd.org. Before you read the full context of the plan, I want to point out major highlights of my FY18 PRIORITIZED BUDGET REQUEST. More detail can be found in the online document.

- An 8.1% increase over FY17; no cuts to programs/services
- Increases adequate funding for special education services, keeping programs within our schools
- Contractual increase to school transportation, both regular and special education
- Improvement of class sizes across K-12 (OAK-25, OMS-24, ELEM-21-24) with the addition of 10.2 FTE classroom teachers/instructors
- Increase offerings at the high school, eliminating the need for directed studies
- Address needed technology equipment replacement and additions, as well as networking and wireless features with the addition of Technology Instructors
- Provides library services across all 5 schools, restoring 3.0 FTE library paraprofessionals at each school, with a full-time teaching Library Media Specialist to ensure that High School NEASC Accreditation is not compromised

I hope that what is in this budget document helps our residents understand that this is not a “frills” type of budget, but a necessary and needed school budget to ensure that our students receive the best well-rounded education possible. Although we face budget challenges each and every year, I do appreciate your willingness to read and comprehend what is needed now. Please also consider viewing online at www.awrsd.org the School Committee’s FY18 Budget Presentation on January 30, 2017. Here you can see charts and tables that explain the costs associated with our school operations and the lack of revenue that the district has received. On behalf of our faculty and staff, I do thank all Ashburnham and Westminster residents for their support of their public schools.

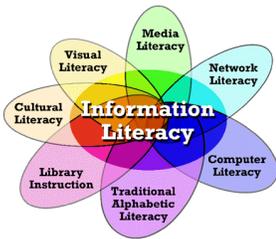
Sincerely,

Gary F. Mazzola, Ed.D.,
Superintendent of Schools

**Please note that the following symbols are aligned to the 3 key components of the strategic plan, *AshWest 2021: A Continuous, Strategic Learning Plan*, and are as follows:



= Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning



= Information, Media, & Technology



= Readiness to Wellness

What is the FY18 Budget Request?

The FY18 Prioritized Budget is \$29,989,424, which represents an 8.1% increase over FY17. The Prioritized budget includes adding priorities of the strategic plan, as well as goals of the district such as small class sizes, librarians, athletics, and wider array of class offerings at the high school.

FY17 Budget	\$ 27,752,265
FY18 Prioritized Budget	\$ 29,989,424
Increase (\$)	\$ 2,237,159
Increase (%)	8.1%

Budget by Function Codes

Description	FY16 Actual	FY17 Actual	FY18 Level Services	FY18 Needs Budget	FY17 vs FY18 Level Services	FY18 Level Services vs FY18 Prioritized	FY17 vs FY18 Prioritized
1000 Administration	907,652	918,338	930,286	930,286	11,948	0	11,948
2000 Instruction	15,711,128	15,207,368	15,633,094	16,381,315	425,725	748,221	1,173,946
3000 Other School Services	2,776,561	2,690,833	2,799,303	2,879,147	108,470	79,844	188,314
4000 Operations and Maintenance	2,575,311	2,629,161	2,557,526	2,557,526	(71,635)	0	(71,635)
5000 Fixed Charges	4,076,449	4,240,859	4,659,819	4,859,819	418,960	200,000	618,960
6000 Community Services	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	0	0	0
7000 Acquisition of Fixed Assets	53,660	33,610	291,456	391,456	257,846	100,000	357,846
8000 Debt Retirement of Debt Services	836,528	811,590	787,990	787,990	(23,600)	0	(23,600)
9000 Out of District Tuitions	925,166	1,212,506	1,193,886	1,193,886	(18,620)	0	(18,620)
Total	27,870,454	27,752,265	28,861,360	29,989,424	1,109,094	1,128,065	2,237,159

What are the Changes from FY17 Budget to FY18 Prioritized?

Increase in Level Services

Salary Increases	\$ 377,868
Savings from teacher leaves in FY17 added back in for full year FY18	\$ 37,945
Paraprofessionals hired late in the year will be here for full year in FY18	\$ 62,678
No Kindergarten Grant or Revolving Available	\$ 12,822
Employee and Other Insurance Expenses	\$ 364,068
Regular and Special Ed Transportation Increases	\$ 97,337
Worcester County Retirement Assessment	\$ 54,892
Increase in Special Education Costs	\$ 34,491
Performance Contract Payment- offset by savings	\$ 271,455
Facilities Savings	\$ (107,862)
Capital Payments Interest Reduction	\$ (23,600)
Mentor Program now being charged out of Grant	\$ (27,000)
Reduction in Supplies and Services	\$ (46,000)
Subtotal	\$ 1,109,094

Increase to Prioritized Budget

Increase Teaching Staff

Add 3 classroom teachers to JR Briggs Elementary**	\$ 165,000
Add 1 classroom teacher to Westminster Elementary**	\$ 55,000
Add .2 for classroom teacher at Overlook Middle School**	\$ 10,845
Add 3 classroom teachers to Oakmont High School**	\$ 165,000
Add 2 Digital Learning Instructors**	\$ 130,000
Add 1 Special Education Teacher at Overlook Middle School**	\$ 60,000
Overlook Middle School Para-Professional	\$ 24,000
JR Briggs Kindergarten Para-Professional	\$ 23,000
Restore High School Librarian and Library Para-Professionals at all elementary schools**	\$ 74,276
Professional Development related to Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)**	\$ 12,500
Elementary Science Supplies @ NGSS Implementation**	\$ 25,600
Oakmont Tech Ed Supplies	\$ 3,000
Restore Athletics**	\$ 66,535
Extra-Curricular and Marching Band Increases	\$ 5,809
Security App working with town police and fire departments**	\$ 7,500
Technology Equipment	\$ 100,000
Additional health and life insurance benefits for new employees	\$ 200,000
Subtotal	\$ 1,128,065

Total	\$ 2,237,159
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****Included in the AshWest 2021: A Continuous, Learning Strategic Plan**

Why the change in Level Services?

- **Salary Increases \$415,813**

This amount includes ALL negotiated and contractual obligations for all **300+** AshWest employees.

- **Paraprofessionals hired late in the year will be here for full year in FY18 \$62,678**

New special education students require additional services and some require 1:1 support as required by their IEP.

- **No Kindergarten Grant or Revolving Available \$12,822**

In FY17 the Kindergarten Grant was eliminated. There was \$12,822 in the Kindergarten Revolving fund left from previous tuitions which were applied to cover a portion of the loss of the grant this past year.

- **Employee and Other Insurance Expenses \$364,068**

We projected an 18% increase in employee health insurance and typical yearly increases in life, building, and liability insurances.

- **Regular and Special Education Transportation Increases \$97,337**

The regular education transportation contract is increasing in FY18 by \$47,144. Special Ed transportation increase is due to additional students requiring transportation.

- **Worcester County Retirement Assessment \$54,892**

The annual assessment for Worcester Country Retirement increases based on the number of current retirees from Ashburnham-Westminster.

- **Increase in Special Education Costs \$34,491**

This includes increases for required special education services, such as, but not limited to: tutoring, counseling, therapies (occupational and physical), and equipment under IDEA.

- **Performance Contract Payment- Offset by Projected Savings \$271,455**

TD Bank Loan @ 2.2% fixed interest for 18 years, which paid for OAK and OMS facilities improvement and building envelope energy savings project. Included in this cost was a new **roof** for Overlook, new **boilers** at Overlook and Oakmont, installation of **pellet boiler** at Overlook, **new univents** in all classrooms at Overlook, and replacement of lighting to LED at both schools. This payment is offset by facilities savings.

- **Facilities Savings \$(107,862)**

Anticipated savings from Performance Contract for heat, electricity, and maintenance costs.

- **Capital Payments Interest Reduction \$(23,600)**

Annual Debt Payments will be reduced for Oakmont (9 years remaining) and Westminster Elementary (8 years remaining) School Renovation and Improvement Projects.

- **Mentor Program now being charged out of Grant \$(27,000)**

Teacher mentor program as outlined in Ash-West Teachers' Contract will now be paid for from Title IIA funding.

- **Reduction in Supplies and Services \$(46,000)**

After careful analysis of all individual school supply and service related line items, cost reductions were made in areas where we were able to combine similar functions, modify approaches, and initiate competitive bidding.

Why the change in the Prioritized/Requested Budget?

▪ Increase Teaching Staff

- Add 3 classroom teachers to J.R. Briggs Elementary \$165,000
 - Currently several grade levels at JR Briggs have 30 student per class. These additional teachers would ensure average class sizes will be 22-24 students. Without these teachers at a level services budget some classes could have more than 30 students.

- Add 1 classroom teacher to Westminster Elementary \$55,000
 - Currently at Westminster Elementary School there is one grade level that has almost 30 students. This would ensure all grades will have an average of 22-24 students per grade.

- Add .2 for classroom teacher at Overlook Middle School \$10,845
 - This would enable the grade 7 science teacher currently at .8 to be full time and reduce class size.

- Add 3 classroom teachers to Oakmont High School \$165,000
 - To provide 18 additional course offerings which would eliminate the need for directed/applied studies 3 full-time instructors at Oakmont need to be added.

- Add 2 Digital Learning Instructors (Strategic Plan) \$130,000
 - To meet the demands of the digital age for our students and to ensure that our teachers are trained, it is crucial that we have teachers/instructors/coaches to work with all students and teachers to provide this necessary skill set.



- Add 1 Special Education Teacher at Overlook Middle School
\$60,000

- Our programs with out of district providers is SIGNIFICANTLY lower than that of all other districts. This keeps our students serviced in our community schools enabling dollars to be spent on instruction and not on exorbitant tuitions and transportations costs. We need to add a teacher for a new program to keep these students in-house because we can provide what they need in their own community versus out of district.

- **Overlook Middle School Paraprofessional \$24,000**

- The paraprofessional would be assigned to the new special education teacher to ensure the delivery of required services, as well as provide on-going social and emotional support to the students.

- **JR Briggs Kindergarten Paraprofessional \$23,000**

- This paraprofessional is a result of increased enrollment at the Kindergarten level, which will be increased by 1 section next year. In prior years the district received the Kindergarten Grant from the Commonwealth, which paid for these teaching assistants at the early childhood instructional level.

- **Restore High School Librarian and Library Paraprofessionals at all elementary schools \$74,276 (Increase 2 sections at OAKMONT Program of Studies)**

- Our NEASC Accreditation Report requests an update on the loss the high school library/media specialist in September 2017. At that time, the decision to place the high school on warning status will result in providing detailed action taken to address the loss of the library media specialist, as well as its impact on the students and staff.



○ **Professional Development related to Next Generation Standards included in Strategic Plan \$12,500**

- The state will require all districts to implement Next Generations Science Standards in the 2018-2019 school year. These monies will provide workshop, training, and summer curriculum writing funds to implement these standards.



○ **Elementary Science Supplies for Next Generation Science Standards \$25,600**

- New Supplies need to be purchased to implement the Next Generation Science Standards.



○ **Oakmont TechEd Supplies \$3,000**

- Courses and materials for this program are crucial to its success. These monies will increase equipment and technology needed to operate the program in wood, metal, and laser design, as well as computer aided design/mgmt. (CAD/CAM)



○ **Restore Athletics \$66,535**

- All athletics that were reduced in the previous budget are restored with no increase in user fees.



○ **Extra-Curricular and Marching Band Increases \$5,809**

- Some extra-curricular reductions (clubs and activities) will be restored and marching band will be able to purchase some new equipment and uniforms.



○ **Security App (In conjunction with Ash & Wes Town Police and Fire Departments) \$7,500**

- At the request of both town safety officials, a computerized telecommunications application (app) needs to be installed on employee cell phones to alert safety personnel and school officials of pending threats in the area, intruders, or active shooters in an emergency situation.



- **Technology Equipment included in the Strategic Plan \$100,000**
 - This replaces classroom projectors, voice lift systems, document cameras, and speakers. We have no replacement inventory when this equipment fails. These monies would assist the school district to realize a replacement/renewal program to provide new and updated classroom AV technology. This is part of an 8 year *renewable plan/cycle*.



- **Additional Benefits for New Employees \$200,000**
 - Whenever new employees are added to an existing school budget, there must be adequate monies available to cover employee benefits, such as health and life insurance costs. This amount should be sufficient, in addition to fund the new opt-out program for any new employees.