



FY24 BUDGET MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT

I would like to thank the entire school community for welcoming me to the Newton Public Schools for the 2022-2023 school year. Since July, I have had the privilege of serving as your Interim Superintendent of Schools, a role in which I have been proud to support the full breadth and depth of high-quality educational programming. With high expectations for student learning and meaningful opportunities for all students to reach their full potential, the Newton Public Schools is undoubtedly one of the premier school districts in the Commonwealth.

Working with NPS leaders, educators, and staff and meeting with families over the past several months has clarified my understanding of Newton's unwavering commitment to academic excellence and educational equity. This commitment, which begins in preschool and continues through our post-secondary programs, means students are challenged academically, provided with appropriate mental health and social emotional support, and prepared to engage in the most complex issues facing our society. Some of the most important initiatives that have been realized in the past few years include:

- A high-quality, engaging Full Day Kindergarten program
- Optimal class sizes to provide positive learning environments focused on personalized learning for all students
- Additional instructional and support staff and services to improve academic achievement and support all learners
- Meaningful social and emotional supports and increased guidance and counseling to support the growing needs of students
- Implementation of social justice initiatives to create a more just and equitable school community
- Expanded technology program in grades K-12
- Hiring and retaining highly qualified, experienced and committed teachers and staff
- A Capital Improvement Plan that includes completion of three new elementary schools, a newly renovated preschool, and approval for three additional new elementary schools in the near future- Lincoln Eliot, Countryside and Franklin.

We now find ourselves at the next inflection point for our schools and community. Our students, and the world around us has changed dramatically. Our continued recovery from the pandemic means supporting the heightened academic and social emotional



needs of students, as well as supporting our educators and staff who are experiencing their own trauma and exhaustion. To maintain a strong, high quality school system that benefits not only our students, but our entire community, we must do the following:

- Provide an academically rigorous and engaging program of study in which students have access to challenging classes and coursework
- Create inclusive school communities that meet the needs of all learners and ensure that all students feel welcomed and supported
- Maintain our commitment to providing robust and meaningful mental health supports to all students in schools
- Continue our commitment to building an anti-racist community in which students and staff recognize the structural systems that have led to systemic racism, dismantle these systems and build a more just and equitable future for all students
- Maintain the ability to attract and retain highly qualified, talented, and experienced educators and leaders who are committed to serving the Newton school community
- Continue important progress on updating our school buildings so that they promote and sustain 21st century learning

All of our current initiatives and our commitments for the future must be supported by our budget, a budget that has been strained over the past few years by COVID, rising operational costs, declining revenues, and long-standing structural deficits. Last year, we reduced teaching positions and support staff to balance our FY23 budget. While these cuts were painful, we were able to maintain essential academic and social emotional supports for students. However, we knew going into this year that the budget would be tight, and the budget gap would likely be larger than the previous year.

In October, Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, recognizing the challenges faced by both city and schools in FY23, proposed an operational override for Newton voters to consider. The override would have provided the Newton Public Schools operating budget with an additional \$4.5 million this year.

It was my greatest privilege to meet so many NPS families and Newton community members as I attended PTO meetings, community forums, and virtual town hall events to share information about why this additional funding was needed. I learned so much about both the successes of this district and the very real challenges that persist. Families and community members asked important and challenging questions about



district staffing and operations. It was an important exercise in clearly communicating our commitment to meeting the needs of students both now and into the future.

Ultimately, the voters made a different choice and did not approve the operational override. We respect the will of the voters and will work within the parameters that have been laid before us. Our strategy is to do everything possible to limit the impact on students in our classrooms, while fulfilling our obligation to prepare a balanced budget.

While our FY24 budget goal is to maintain the current level of service provided to students and build a sustainable budget over time, we face an \$8 million shortfall in our current proposed budget for next school year. This shortfall comes despite the 3.73 % increase in the allocation from the city. Lack of funding from the failed override, rising costs, changes in funding from the state, expiration of grant funding, use of one-time funds, and the rise in student needs all contribute to this significant budget gap. Given the size of the budget gap, it simply will not be possible to maintain the same level of service the Newton Public Schools have provided to students in past years.

Our budget assumes a \$2 million dollar carry forward from the FY23 budget into FY24, as well as the increase in our allocation from the City by \$600,000, and \$1.4 million of one-time funding with a Circuit Breaker Bridge Credit of \$1.4 M from the City, resulting in an FY24 deficit to \$4.9 million dollars. The “carry forward” is possible due to a spending and hiring freeze instituted in January 2023, as well as inability to hire for needed positions throughout the year due to staffing shortages. However, this continued reliance on “carry forward” each year creates a structural budget deficit that is unsustainable over time.

Closing a \$4.9 million dollar budget gap will impact every corner of the Newton Public Schools organization. The four areas in which we will look to make reductions include:

- Non-personnel expenses
- Administrative and operations (personnel and expenses)
- Extracurricular activities (athletics, fine arts, clubs)
- Classroom and school personnel

Specific reductions and impacts will include:

- Reduce classroom teachers and aides, resulting in increased class sizes at all levels and reduced support in classrooms



- Reduce supplemental and enrichment programming and coordination, as well as instrumental offerings at the elementary level
- Reduce after school athletics and enrichment programs at the middle and high school levels
- Reduce administrative and operations positions throughout the district
- Reduce English Language Learner (ELL) staffing and support
- Reduce instructional software, segments of 1:1 device program, library and instructional technology
- Reduce professional development, staffing and administration in Student Services and social-emotional learning departments
- Increase fees

While these reductions are painful, we continue to be committed to expanding our special education programs that allow our Newton students to remain in our district schools learning and growing with their friends and peers. Expanding current programs allows the district to support our students with appropriate and specialized learning programs and avoid outside placements with costly out-of-district tuitions.

Two additional areas in which we will seek to restore or enhance funding are in Teaching and Learning and cyber security. Last year, we reduced curriculum coordination and academic support staff. Curriculum staff provide critical support to vetting new curriculum, monitoring implementation across schools, providing support and training, and ensuring collaboration across the district. In addition, as we see cyber attacks on districts across the country, it is critical that our technology infrastructure and cyber security are able to protect student data and prevent disruption of systems operations.

It is important to know that for our students, the impact of the pandemic is not over. It frankly will impact student academics and mental health for years to come. Investing in our schools as a primary resource for post pandemic recovery is a key strategy for investing in the well being of our students and the strength of our community.

As my time in Newton draws to a close, I would like to thank our partners Police Chief Carmichael; Fire Chief Gentile; Commissioner of Public Buildings, Josh Morse; Commissioner of Public Works, Jim McGonagle; Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Linda Walsh; and President of the Newton Teachers Association, Mike Zilles. I have valued their partnership and collaboration this year as we have worked together to serve the students and families of this city. I would also like to thank the Newton City



Council for their support in putting two debt-exclusions and the operating override before the voters. The approval of funding for both Countryside and Franklin means we can continue our progress on modernizing our school buildings.

Mayor Ruthanne Fuller and her team at City Hall including City Chief Operation Officer, Jonathan Yeo; City Chief Financial Officer, Maureen Lemieux; and Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion, Hattie Kerwin Derrick, were true partners this year as together we shared information about the school and city budgets and financial outlook. As we attended meetings, forums, discussions, and town halls, it was very clear to me that she and her team care deeply about serving and caring for the residents of Newton.

It has been my pleasure to work with the Newton School Committee this year. Tamika, Kathy, Rajeev, Chris, Anping, Emily, Paul, Cove and Mayor Fuller, They are a group of dedicated individuals committed to supporting the goals of our district. I admire their advocacy on behalf of students, as well as the time and effort they dedicate to their role in the community. This year, they worked tirelessly to select a new superintendent for the district. Dr. Nolin will be a terrific leader for Newton and I know the School Committee is ready to support her.

Our district leaders, both Central Staff and principals, continued to provide outstanding leadership during this year of transition. To all the principals, I would like to personally commend you for your dedication. During the past few years you have been determined, compassionate, knowledgeable and supportive for all our students and families when it has mattered most. You are the backbone of our district. At the core of the Newton Public Schools is a dynamic and forward thinking Central Staff team that has and will continue to be strategic, deliberate, and collaborative in their efforts to provide a premier education for every student across our district. Thank you Ayesha, Renee, Casey, Toby, Steve, Kathy and Jill. I am grateful for their support as they helped me to guide the district. Dr. Nolin is fortunate to have a terrific team to welcome her to Newton next year. I am especially grateful for the partnership with Liam, Sean, Alyssa and the entire team in Financial services for preparing for this challenging budget throughout this school year.

I am grateful to have worked alongside my Executive Assistant Carolyn Campo and the School Committee Executive Assistant Lisa Mazzola during this past school year. They have been invaluable while working long hours to support an Interim Superintendent, the School Committee and our entire NPS school community. I also commend our



Communications Director, Julie McDonough for always working behind the scenes to highlight, and set the tone for messaging and portraying our NPS Values to all stakeholders.

Finally, Newton Public School educators and staff are incredibly hard-working, resilient, and persistent. Despite the challenges of the past few years, they remain committed to teaching and supporting each and every one of our students. The heightened need of students, coupled with their own traumatic experience with the pandemic, make their jobs very, very difficult. Yet, I see them every day in our classrooms giving of themselves completely to help our students. Despite the financial challenges ahead, I remain committed to doing everything possible to support our educators and this generation of Newton Public School students.

FUND: 0001 - GENERAL FUND
 DEPARTMENT: NEWTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET
 DEPARTMENT SUMMARY**

	ACTUAL 2020	ACTUAL 2021	ACTUAL 2022	ORIGINAL 2023	RECOMMENDED 2024	CHANGE 2023 To 2024
FUNCTIONAL ELEMENT SUMMARY						
98001080 SCHOOL COMMITTEE	211,905,404	243,145,343	253,207,930	262,070,208	268,655,413	6,585,205
TOTAL FUNCTIONAL ELEMENT	211,905,404	243,145,343	253,207,930	262,070,208	268,655,413	6,585,205
OBJECT SUMMARY						
5795 - UNDISTRIBUTED BUDGET	211,905,404	243,145,343	253,207,930	262,070,208	268,655,413	6,585,205
TOTAL OBJECT	211,905,404	243,145,343	253,207,930	262,070,208	268,655,413	6,585,205