



January 11, 2021

Dear Members of the Board of Education:

The development of the proposed 2021-2022 Milford Public Schools budget was a challenging and difficult one. This budget is built with significant driving factors within the context of a world-wide pandemic crisis. While we are wholeheartedly committed to the attainment of the Vision of the Learner (VoL) through High Quality Instruction (HQI) with a focus on relationships with and among students and staff, those efforts have been redesigned in order to be responsive to the need to focus on economic and educational recovery.

The **proposed 2021-2022 budget of \$99,734, 375 reflects a 2.255% increase over last year's adopted budget**. This budget represents hopes and dreams for our students and staff that were unrealized in the 2020-2021 school year due to needing to put things "on hold" because of our district's response to the pandemic crisis. Many program improvements and new initiatives were deferred because of the unanticipated costs related to opening schools under strict health and safety guidelines due to COVID-19. This proposal continues to move our school district forward with essential program improvements yet is mindful of economic conditions facing our community.

Before we consider program improvements and savings, I'd like to bring your attention to four factors related to this proposed budget:

1. The business of education invests heavily in human capital. **76.87% of the total budget is made up of salaries and benefits.** There is a net increase of 1.29 FTE positions and overall salary accounts increased due to contractual obligations and inclusion of new positions. Our team conducts a full review of FTEs at each level with every budget cycle. Redistributing and/or repurposing FTEs is done wherever possible in response to enrollment and program needs.
2. A major driver of this proposed budget can be found in the increases in some special education budget lines. Specifically, Tuition for Special Education - Public increased by \$225,562 or 33.928%; Tuition for Special Education - Non Public increased by \$1,758,313 or 47.808%; and Special Education - Transportation increased by \$93,361 or 3.867%. The total increase in these Special Education accounts is \$2,077,236. This increase totals 2.13% of the total district budget increase of 2.255%. This is primarily due

to a sharp increase of students needing out-of-district placement during the 2019-2020 school year, hence impacting the current 2020-2021 budget and continuing through the 2021-2022 year. More information will be provided in my budget presentation to the Board of Education and through workshops as needed.

3. While not represented in a single line item in the proposed budget, program improvement efforts are throughout with a primary focus on educational recovery due to the pandemic crisis and race, equity and social justice. Plans for the 2021-2022 school year in the area of teaching and learning and social/emotional wellness have coherent themes that focus on accelerating curriculum and working toward a more anti-racist and socially just learning environment.

New - System Improvements

- **World Language instruction will be expanded to 3rd grade, making our elementary program now Kindergarten through 3rd grades.**
- **Passenger van for The Academy** to provide community-based learning opportunities for our students.

Carry Over - System Improvements

- **Science** will be a key focus of the 2021-2022 school year (originally scheduled for the 2020-2021 school year). With a newly revised curriculum, we will implement those program improvements in elementary science labs, as well as curricular and furniture updates in the secondary schools.

Put On Hold - System Improvements

- The expansion of **High Quality Instruction (HQI)** is central to continued improvement in teaching and learning. While HQI remains our district's primary instructional improvement effort, it will need to be redesigned and prioritized for the 2021-2022 school year.
- With the completion of the program review of our **preschool and kindergarten classes with a focus on intentional play and executive functioning**, we are in the process of developing a multi-year implementation plan in response to what classrooms will look like in a post-pandemic learning environment. Therefore, play-based learning centers and flexible furniture plans will be redesigned.

- We will hold on the following upgrades in **technology**:
 - Elementary:
 - Green screens for video production
 - Middle:
 - Video production equipment at East Shore and Harborside Middle Schools
 - High:
 - Cameras and camcorders for journalism, art and business classes
 - District:
 - Interactive display panels for some Art and Music rooms

- With a newly updated **curriculum revision calendar**, there will be critical, systemic work postponed/extended in the following areas:
 - 3-5 Literacy and Social Studies
 - 6-12 English/Language Arts
 - PK World Language
 - PK-5 School Counseling
 - 6-8 Health
 - PK-8 Physical Education
 - 6-8 Career Technical Education
 - PK-8 Music
 - PK-8 Art

- **K-2 classroom book libraries** are necessary to align to the new curriculum for all elementary schools but will be put on hold.
- The **Music** department will pause the expansion and replacement of music instruments, band uniforms, and seating furniture.
- Opening **school libraries** during the summer at three elementary schools will wait until 2022 - Meadowside, JFK and Pumpkin Delight.
- To better support our families, the district hopes to add a **Community Connections Center (CCC)** in the future.
- The renovation of the **Foran school library** will need to be done but will be put on hold and will likely take two phases of work. As with Jonathan Law's library, we plan to make it a more **21st century learning space** to better meet student learning needs. Lastly, in the future we will **renovate the learning center** into a space that is accessible and allows students to be more collaborative in receiving additional help, as well as, providing one another with support.

- In the area of fitness, many projects still need to be supported. The **fitness rooms at Foran High School and East Shore Middle School** need full renovations. The **cardio equipment for East Shore Middle School** needs to be replaced.

Savings

In order to offset significant unanticipated increases, savings were realized in numerous accounts. Please see the Executive Summary on pages VI - X in this budget book for a list of savings by account. More information will be shared at my presentation to the Board of Education and at subsequent workshops. Below is a summary of savings by object code:

2000 Benefits	\$ (644,799)
3000 Contracted Services	\$ (165,784)
4000 Facilities	\$ (329,109)
6000 Educational Supplies	\$ (172,925)
7000 Educational Supplies & Equipment	\$ (1,198)
8000 Other Educational Support	\$ (8,276)

The pandemic crisis may have slowed our progress in some areas but it most certainly has not diminished the BIG dreams we have for the Milford school community. I appreciate the support and partnership we have engaged in with our city leaders. I look forward to continuing our partnership for the good of the young people of Milford. Preparing a budget that takes many factors into consideration is a challenging task and I'd like to thank our leadership team and members of the business department for their role in its development.

Sincerely,



Anna M. Cutaia, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools