




NEWBURYPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
70 LOW STREET
NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950-4096

Office of the Superintendent

TELEPHONE 978.465.4456
FAX 978.462.3495

Date: October 15, 2007
To: Newburyport School Committee
From: Kevin M. Lyons 
Re: FY08 Operational Deficits and Areas of Concern
Resulting from FY08 Budget Reductions

The FY08 budget resulted in substantial reductions to programs and services to students this school year. Everything was cut as close as possible in order to preserve class size and program integrity. This close shaving of program areas created many stresses on the school system and, of course, many things must be done differently this school year. Most of these impacts were anticipated, some were not. As we begin to develop the FY09 budget, I want to inform you of current concerns in this budget year and implications for FY09 budget development.

Middle School Explores Class Sizes

The Middle School Explores program encompasses art, music, physical education, wellness, and technology. In our budgeting for FY08 we cut too deeply in this area and the resulting class sizes are too large, particularly in Physical Education where classes are running up to 112 students with 2 teachers. The gym area is not large enough to support classes of this size. We seek to reduce these numbers using existing staff and continue to investigate how we can do this.

Implication for FY09: Additional staffing may be necessary in the Middle School Explores area.

Foreign Language

Middle School foreign language was eliminated in the FY08 budget and High School French was reduced such that no freshman could enroll in French. This resulted in the placement of freshmen who had taken French in Middle School being placed in Elementary Spanish and German. This has been a stretch for a significant number of students that has become more evident as the first weeks of school have progressed. Mr. Parent and the High School leadership determined that a structural change was required, and a Basic Spanish course has been created and one elementary course eliminated. This requires the movement of a number of students from one section to another.

This has been one of the most challenging issues for the High School this fall that has precipitated from the budget reductions of FY08.

Implication for FY09: The lack previous foreign language experience of our entering freshmen will be an issue for the High School foreign language program. Mr. Parent and staff will be looking carefully at FY08 offerings and the placement freshmen into different levels of Spanish

and German. The fact should not be lost that we need to restore foreign language instruction to our Middle School educational program.

Special Education Move-ins and Impact on Special Education Assistants

Two families moved to Newburyport during the summer, each having a child with an IEP requiring the assignment of a 1:1 special education assistant. These were not budgeted, as we do not budget for special education contingencies. We have attempted, as yet unsuccessfully, to alter Instructional Assistant assignments in a manner in which we could accommodate these two 1:1 assistant needs without hiring additional assistants.

We may need to hire two unbudgeted Instructional Assistants and would need to find the funds in the current budget.

Implication for FY09 Budget: The risk of unbudgeted special education costs has increased as more reductions have made to the school budget. Special education grants have assumed more and more of what used to be local budget supported costs. The reductions of recent years, and especially last year, further limit discretionary monies that have in the past helped to fund unanticipated and unbudgeted special education costs. We should consider contingency budgeting for special education in future budgets.

Copy Center

The Middle School copy center aide position was eliminated in this year's budget. That large scale copier served Middle School teachers and central needs of the District. Those needs are no less this year and needs of the Molin staff have been added. The Nock Technology Assistant was reassigned for part of her duties this year to help the copy room to function with that help and some volunteer services. This has compromised the effectiveness of the copy room in meeting teacher and system needs and the reassignment of staff has compromised our Instructional Technology efforts.

FY09 Implication: We will have to assess the impact of this FY08 reduction against the many decisions that will have to be made in the development of the FY09 budget.

Finance and Business Operations

Time and task demands on the finance and business operations of the school system have increased dramatically as a result of budget reductions, reorganization of the schools, impacts on student transportation, and an accelerated FY09 budget process. We are significantly behind in a number of routine, but critically important areas including the FY07 End-of-Year Report, Revenue Report, and a number of Human Resources tasks.

FY09 Implication: As indicated in my entry study and report, we need to assess the level of staffing that we have to support the demands of finance and budget operations and reporting, and in particular assess the staffing level in regard to transportation management going forward.