

School Committee Budget Update

January 5, 2024

Following the presentation of the preliminary FY25 budget at the December 7th School Committee meeting, we have gathered questions from the School Committee and understand that there is a general interest in learning more about the proposed staffing changes that include adding two Assistant Principals and an AIDE Director. We have gathered in this document additional information and answers to questions we have received.

Staffing Changes	2
Assistant Principals	3
AIDE Director	8
General Staffing Change Questions	12
General Budget Questions	14
Lincoln Budget	15
Hanscom Budget	17
Special Revenue Funds	23
Food Services Revolving Account	23

Staffing Changes

Over many years, the School Committee and district administration have established ambitious goals for improving our students' education through the strategic planning process and the AIDE audit and plan. While we have made great strides in these areas, we have been hampered by a lack of capacity to accomplish all of the ambitious objectives we have set for Educator Growth and Innovation, Curriculum, Instruction, and Equity and Culture. At the same time, emerging from the pandemic we have seen an increase in needs from our students and staff, further stretching our capacity. Over the past several years we have tried to address these capacity issues with outside consultants and the addition of positions including the Communications and Family Engagement Specialist and the Faculty Resident with limited to mixed success.

This year's change in administration and the pilot of an Assistant Principal model at the Hanscom Schools presented us with a tremendous opportunity to reassess and recalibrate how we have approached these challenges. With new expertise at the table, particularly with extensive former principal experience, and with the early success of the Assistant Principal position at Hanscom this year, the entire leadership team working together identified that we could be much more effective in our work and in reaching the objectives and goals of the strategic plan and the AIDE plan, if we made the following staffing changes, all within the 2.5% budget guidance.

Positions Eliminated			Positions Added		
Position	FTE	Cost	Position	FTE	Cost
Communications position	1.0	\$72,100	Hanscom Assistant Principal*	1.0	\$125,000
Faculty Resident	1.0	\$117,426	Lincoln Assistant Principal	1.0	\$125,000
Fourth EL position	1.0	\$67,198	AIDE Director	1.0	\$140,000
TOTAL	3.0	\$256,724	TOTAL	3.0	\$390,000
<i>* Position currently being piloted at Hanscom</i>					
NET CHANGE				0	-\$133,276

The answers to your questions that follow will shed more light on the specifics of this proposal, what we have learned this year from the Hanscom pilot, and why we have proposed these changes.

Note: Where submitted questions were similar, the responses are grouped together.

Assistant Principals

Q1. Why do we need these positions now? What challenges are we trying to address with these positions?

Capacity to do the work that students need, that School Committee has asked for, and that strategic plans and the AIDE plan have called for has been a need for many years. We tried to begin to address this with the Communications and Community Engagement Specialist and the Faculty resident position. The proposed administrative positions are in large part a reallocation of these resources to what we believe would be a more effective model.

At Hanscom, we have piloted the Assistant Principal model this year. Approaching the midpoint of the school year, the positive impact of this pilot is already being felt. For the first time in many years there is a regular presence in classrooms by the principal or assistant principal. This has allowed for more formalized feedback through the educator evaluation system, and provided for a much stronger system of checks and balances to keep everyone honest about working towards the goals of the school and the district. The structure has also allowed time to refine and in some instances rebuild our systems and structures to ensure better responses to both student and family needs. This has resulted in fewer major disciplinary incidents while also exposing some underlying issues that need to be addressed, but had gone unnoticed. For instance, due to the increased capacity, the school is addressing some of the more difficult challenges related to our AIDE work through work on both the student and adult level. Specific documented improvements through the pilot thus far include:

- Significantly faster follow up and follow through with students, parents, faculty, and staff
- Quicker resolution to disciplinary issues
- Decreased instances of formal bullying investigations (only 1 to date)
- Decreased office referrals because of proactive work with students and teachers
- More time for our counselors to counsel and work with students instead of performing quasi assistant principal duties
- More frequent observations of teachers with timely feedback
- More opportunities to grow our professional community through team building and professional development around instruction
- Beginning to build standardized K-8 system and structures to ensure smooth daily operations
- More after school supervision when needed
- There is always an administrator in the building to assist with any immediate issues
- Increased communication opportunities with faculty, staff, and parents
- Shorter SST meetings as we are proactively addressing student situations. Less meeting time has led to more direct time with students for faculty

Principal Ledebuhr has described the Assistant Principal position as “game-changing” for everyone in the school - administrators, staff, and most importantly students.

We have every expectation that similar improvements would occur on the Lincoln campus if we are able to add an Assistant Principal there. Another expected benefit would be that people in other roles, such as the METCO Director, the Student Services Coordinator, psychologists, counselors, and central office administrators would no longer have to be pulled from their normal responsibilities to do principal coverage. This is particularly important for the mental health team as student needs have grown post-pandemic. An Assistant Principal would also cover more of the managerial and day-to-day needs of staff and students, increasing the Principal's capacity for instructional leadership.

Finally, in recent decades, driven by state and federal mandates and general societal and cultural changes, building administrators have been expected to do more at a faster rate with increased effectiveness. This is true of teachers as well. Teacher support comes from administration, but as the demands have increased, administrators' ability to support all teachers with what they need has been reduced by these pressures. This has cultural impacts on a building. For administrators, doing more without additional support further strains their abilities to simultaneously address the needs of staff, students, and parents, while also establishing and supporting a clear vision for the building moving forward. Inevitably, the urgent situations take priority and the more thoughtful, longer-term planning gets pushed to the back burner continuously. Plans can then feel fragmented, damaging implementation and support. Adding administrative capacity would have an immediate positive effect allowing us to both meet needs in the moment and do the long-term strategic work that will allow us to reach our strategic plan and AIDE plan goals and objectives.

Q2. What are the student outcomes of adding these positions?

The greatest factor in student growth is teacher quality. Adding the Assistant Principals will provide principals with greater capacity to work on supervision and coaching. This will directly impact students by letting principals focus more time on teacher improvement and growth.

It will also provide principals and the mental health team with a greater ability to respond to the social/emotional needs of students and behavioral issues in a timely fashion. This benefits students in crisis, and every other student. Principals and Assistant Principals will also be able to proactively address behavior and bullying, reducing incidents of both over time.

Q3. How would we measure those outcomes?

In the response to Q1, we listed the outcomes that Hanscom has documented this year through the pilot. We would track similar measures next year to measure the effectiveness of the positions. An additional specific measure we would track is the frequency of classroom observations.

Q4. What are the costs for not acting?

Administrative capacity issues have been real and ongoing for many years. If we do not act, teacher development and instructional leadership will continue to take a back seat and school improvement will slow. Principals will have to continue to provide less meaningful feedback through the educator evaluation system, hampering teacher growth, and will continue to find it difficult to create meaningful teacher/administrator relationships. Longer response times will lead to faculty, student, and parent frustration, and the mental health team will continue to be pulled from their student-facing responsibilities. We also would expect to continue to see higher instances of bullying and overall behavioral challenges without the capacity to address these areas proactively.

At Hanscom, where we have been successfully piloting the Assistant Principal model, we would experience a regression to our prior capacity challenges. The loss of the second assistant principal will mean that the principal will have to go back to more managerial tasks of handling the day to day crises that arise. This will rebuild frustration that has subsided over situations not being addressed in a timely manner.

The biggest impact will be the loss of opportunity for teacher observation, professional development, timely communication, and the opportunity to improve school-level systems over time. Without the ability to appropriately provide teachers feedback we will not grow in our capacity to meet students needs, provide professional development to teachers, implement targeted interventions, and effectively run smooth building operations.

Burnout is also a significant concern in administrative roles, particularly in light of new demands that have emerged over the last 5 years. Last year 1 in 5 principals statewide moved districts or left the profession. Adding this administrator increases the chances we can retain administrators. Greater capacity to address teacher needs will also help address teacher burnout and retention.

Q5. How do we address the needs without personnel [if the positions are not added]? What's the plan for addressing the needs without personnel, i.e., bridging structures? If not this now, what is the bridge to a potential consideration at a later date?

We have been trying to address the needs by asking principals to do more, but with diminishing returns because there are a finite number of hours in a day.

Currently, the mental health team, central office administrators, and other building administrators (Student Service Coordinator and METCO Director/AIDE Coordinator) are called upon to cover some responsibilities when the principal is out of the building or unavailable. This model is not effective, but is our best option absent the changes we have proposed.

The bridge without an Assistant Principal is that the principals alone will continue to do all the

tasks expected of them at a rate they can manage. The reality is that in order to do all that is expected without additional support, the efficiency, depth, and timeliness of tasks will be negatively impacted. This may mean, for example, observations happening less frequently, disciplinary follow through taking longer, or a delay in response time to communications and needs.

Q6. Are there quantifiable differences between the Hanscom and Lincoln populations that would support different administrative structures?

While the two models would be different, both models would have three building administrators K-8, so we expect the capacity gains to be similar regardless of the specific structure. The structures changed at Hanscom due to the specific situation this past summer. To realign the two models now would be unnecessarily disruptive to one campus or the other.

That said, the dynamic nature of the Hanscom student population with a typical annual churn of 30%, creates an environment where reallocating resources across K-8 is a necessary annual activity. Having a single principal managing K-8 and being able to make the hard decisions about where to allocate resources based on ever-changing enrollments is a better fit for this dynamic population. In addition, Lincoln's grades 5-8 have historically been larger than Hanscom's 5-8.

Q7. Would student-facing professionals, adjustment counselors, etc. have greater impact on administrative concerns than an assistant principal? Why are assistant principals a higher priority than other positions, such as counselors or instructional coaches?

Adjustment counselors and instructional coaches are important roles, but they address different needs. While school counselors are essential to direct student support, their work primarily focuses on individual student needs. School leaders are best trained to view the needs of the school in a systemic manner. Their expertise assists the district in responding to student needs by developing and implementing school wide systems and structures in response to student social/emotional learning needs. With additional leadership support, response to student needs will be able to expand in a consistent manner across the organization. Moreover, the principal and assistant principals are the instructional leaders of the school. With adequate capacity, the roles of the principal and assistant principal also includes instructional coaching of faculty and staff members.

In response to our AIDE work, the district has explored implementing Restorative Practices into our work to respond to student related needs. Implementation of Restorative Practices requires resources and must be led by a dedicated leadership team who have skill to train faculty and take a systemic approach to implementation. This will require time from district and building based leadership. Having Assistant Principals builds that capacity and supports the district to move forward with training and, over time, implementation. The assistant principals would

allow the principal and all of the school leadership team to focus more on improving teacher quality and instructional leadership. While coaches play an important role, they are not formal supervisors and do not have the same accountability levers that a principal or assistant principal has.

Additionally, with added school leader capacity, a school leader would be able to meet with each grade-level support team (teachers and counselor) weekly and consistently, which increases responsiveness and response time to students' learning and social-emotional needs, thus having a greater impact on student outcomes, student well-being, and targeted interventions.

Finally, as addressed above, the mental health team is often pulled for pseudo-administrative responsibilities. Adding the Assistant Principals would allow them to focus more on student-facing work that is the core of their responsibilities.

Q8. How might assistant principal positions connect with extracurricular and after-school opportunities?

Assistant Principals would create additional capacity to supervise and manage after school opportunities if our extracurricular activities and after-school opportunities were to expand. There is also an important supervisory piece for home athletic events, which typically don't immediately begin at the end of the school day. That means we can have athletes and spectators about the campus awaiting the start of an event who need supervision and oversight.

Q9. What data can be shared around discipline or safety care numbers, and how might they be impacted by these positions?

From September through December, Hanscom has had a meaningful reduction in bullying investigations, 5-8 students receiving incident slips and students involved in CPI calls, as compared to the same period last year.

Hanscom Schools Data			
	September-December 2022	September-December 2023	Increase/ Decrease
Bullying Investigations	6	1	84%
5-8 Students receiving Incident Slips	34	24	30%
51 A	2	2	0%
Students involved in CPI Calls	28	19	33%

AIDE Director

Q10. What are the issues we are trying to address with this position? What evidence do we have around why this position is needed? Is the need new?

The need for an AIDE Director was identified by the LAAG group through the audit process and development of the AIDE plan. We have been doing our best to advance the AIDE work with our existing capacity, but to truly meet the goals identified in the AIDE plan, as well as our strategic plan objective around equity and culture, we need to add a district-level leader who can champion and lead this work.

With an AIDE Director, the district would be able to:

- Effectively and consistently develop specific workshops and training for district leadership, school leadership, faculty, students, and families related to diversity, equity, cultural proficiency, and restorative justice/practice.
- Provide teachers and administrators with direct, 1:1 coaching, support, and advice when individual instances occur.
- Develop comprehensive and equitable after-school opportunities for students - especially for our young adolescents and middle-level learners.
- Develop and deliver quality professional development on cultural competencies across the district.
- Plan and develop programs and practices that facilitate school-based family and community engagement in service of increasing academic achievement.
- Facilitate mediations between and among faculty, staff, and students as needed.
- Provide timely and consistent consultation to families, faculty, staff, district leadership, and school leadership specific to antiracism, inclusion, diversity, equity, and restorative practice.

Moreover, effective Restorative Practices will increase our ability to act upon our commitment to AIDE. The implementation of Restorative Practices requires a district to be fully committed to training and has the resources available to engage in the work. An AIDE Director expands the capacity of district leadership and, most importantly, school leadership teams to focus on training leaders and faculty in Restorative Practices, developing and supervising an implementation plan, and sustaining these valuable approaches over time.

Q11. What is the difference between an AIDE Coordinator and AIDE Director position? Do the differences in title refer to differences in salary/responsibilities?

The bulk of the METCO Director's responsibilities are focused on the METCO program. While the role also carries the title of "AIDE Coordinator", this is not the focus of the work. The AIDE Director would be an entirely new role, with a completely different job description focused solely on AIDE work across the district.

Q12. What are the costs for not acting?

For over two years, the Assistant Superintendent and METCO Director have partnered to launch the LAAG group, run the Equity Audit and lead professional development. This precursor work has laid a foundation and led up to the point of doing the real work. This work is substantial and critical and we need greater leadership capacity to meet the full ambition of what the AIDE plan and strategic plan have charged us with. If we do not add that capacity, our progress towards those objectives will continue to be incremental and will not achieve all that we hope to accomplish in the short-term.

Q13. I'm concerned about the shortcut of collaborative process, yet also concerned for the stresses on our administrators evidenced in the budget proposal. Are there interim measures we can take to address the current stress on Lincoln principals and our METCO director while we take time to examine and discuss more fully the best response?

To clarify, the request for these positions is not primarily about reducing stress on administrators. Rather it's about increasing capacity to meet the district's goals and strategic priorities. Through the strategic plan and the AIDE plan, both of which were developed collaboratively with multiple stakeholders including the School Committee, we have already identified our objectives. These positions are how we work to achieve those goals. If these positions are not funded, we will as always continue to try to move the work forward, but we anticipate slower progress than we would like.

Additionally, with ~90 students in the METCO program, combining the METCO Director position with the AIDE Coordinator position shortchanges and undermines the comprehensive support needed for the Lincoln METCO program. Based on student numbers, the METCO program should be served by two (2.0) full-time positions. Currently, the METCO program is served by one and a half (~1.5) positions, when you consider that the METCO Director's position is on paper .5 AIDE Coordinator. If we don't add the AIDE Director position, we will continue to both lack the leadership capacity to fully implement the AIDE plan and understaff the METCO program.

Q14. What are other ways to address concerns for AIDE work, Inclusion and Belonging, Human Resources and hiring, communications, instructional coaching, etc etc? What alternatives might exist to addressing the identified needs? If not this now, what is the bridge to a potential consideration at a later date?

Without an AIDE Director, the aforementioned actions in the itemized bullet points in question 10 would be severely diminished or would not happen altogether. We would continue to do our best to advance the work, but would be limited in the scope of what we could achieve.

Q15. How does [the AIDE Director] tie into the five-year AIDE plan? [What were] LAAG recommendations? What other initiatives or programs would go along with this position? What would the costs be? What AIDE-related initiatives have been put in place so far this year? Provide the History of the AIDE work.

In May of 2021, the LPS AIDE Advisory Group (LAAG) presented an [Equity Audit Report](#) to the School Committee. LAAG reviewed 19 different areas and identified School and District Leadership among those areas rated “Not Yet Started/Not at all”. The findings in the report led to the development of the [LPS 5-year AIDE Action Plan](#). In the action plan, under the “Support, Action, and Accountability” strand, one of the areas of focus was “Planning for an AIDE Administrator” and specifically “assess our needs and work with the school and town DEI groups to identify potential paths toward creating a unique role for an AIDE administrator.” In the subsequent years, there have been conversations, both among the administration and with School Committee about possible ways to address this goal, but no action has yet been taken. As detailed above, we have now reached an inflection point where we have laid a foundation for the work, but now more urgently need the leadership capacity to bring this work to the next level.

In recent years, including 23-24, our AIDE work has included professional development for teachers, leadership participation in a teacher diversification PLC, REI training for all staff, and the 21 day AIDE challenge. AIDE work is also at the core of our Portrait of a Learner Framework. This has all been good and important work, and we are poised to have an AIDE Director lead the next phase, focusing more directly on student outcomes and meaningful change.

Q16. Does this position need to be full-time? If so, why? Are there opportunities to share a position with Sudbury, LSRHS, or the town of Lincoln?

There is substantial work to be done and the scope of responsibilities for the position certainly warrant a full-time role. It could also be challenging to fill a part-time role, and we know that engagements with part-time consultants, while helpful, are always limited by the consultant’s learning curve in understanding and engaging our unique community. Sharing a position could

be very difficult because the needs will be different among different identities, because the organizations are different. While there is certainly overlap, an AIDE Director in a school district should have a focus on teaching and learning practices that wouldn't be relevant at a town level. Furthermore, if Lincoln was to share a position with much larger districts, our proportion of the position would be smaller and we would not gain all the capacity and focus we need.

Q17. What are other districts of similar sizes doing in this area? Have other districts been successful in addressing these needs without a similar position?

The MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is developing tools and resources to support [DEI work](#) in schools. All district leaders belong to MASS, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, also supporting [diversity, equity and inclusion work](#). As such, most Massachusetts public schools are focused on ensuring that all students, regardless of background and identity, have access to an education that allows them to meet their full potential. Information on the work occurring in comparable districts is linked below:

[Acton-Boxborough](#)

[Concord-Carlisle](#)

[Hingham](#)

[Lexington](#)

[Lincoln-Sudbury](#)

[Medfield](#)

[Needham](#)

[Wellesley](#)

[Wayland](#)

[Weston](#)

[Westwood](#)

Q18. How does [the AIDE Director] position tie into Parry's entry plan?

Parry's entry plan will not be completed until March. At this time, it is hard to predict how the AIDE Director position will tie to his plan; at the same time, it is hard to imagine an entry plan that would not tie to the identified needs that an AIDE Director position is intended to meet.

General Staffing Change Questions

Q19. We were on the path of Instructional Coaches and an organizational study. Could we reconsider doing an organizational study if we can get grant funds for it?

The organizational study that was discussed in prior cycles was around central office administrative capacity, and specifically the need (or not) for an administrator for HR. These changes are outside the scope of that, and wouldn't preclude us from doing that study.

The Instructional Coaches proposal was championed by the former Assistant Superintendent, and partially implemented with two instructional coaches this year. The current Administrative Council and the current Central Office Team believe that the two Assistant Principals and the AIDE Director would be the most effective way to drive improvement in the schools. Pushing out action on this proposal to a future year, means that we would not be addressing real needs in our schools for at least another year and a half, and two K-12 education hiring cycles. That would be a significant lost opportunity.

Moreover, the principal and assistant principals are the instructional leaders of the school. With adequate capacity, the roles of the principal and assistant principal also includes instructional coaching of faculty and staff members. The assistant principals would allow the principal and all of the school leadership team to focus more on improving teacher quality and instructional leadership. While instructional coaches can play a role, they are not formal supervisors and do not have the same accountability levers that a principal or assistant principal has.

Q20. [What is the impact of the] reallocation of the Faculty Resident and Communication Specialist positions from Central Office directly to the Lincoln [and Hanscom] schools? Does reallocation of FTEs and eliminating the Faculty Residency and the Communication Specialists in exchange for AP and Aide Director does not necessarily increase capacity? Do we have the same capacity or is there more?

On both campuses, this reallocation of resources moves capacity from the central offices to the buildings - closer to students and teachers. Rob Ford, who was directly involved in the conception and advocacy for both of these positions, strongly agrees that the proposed changes including the elimination of these positions is the best way to move our work forward and more effectively progress towards our strategic goals and objectives.

Replacing the Faculty Resident and the Communications and Community Engagement Specialist, although being equal in FTE to the AIDE Director and one of the Assistant Principals, adds significantly more capacity. The Faculty Resident is a teacher position and the Communications and Community Engagement Specialist is a non-union position that in practice we have been unable to fill at the salary it was budgeted. The new positions are administrative positions and have a higher level of responsibility and will work beyond the school year. The new positions are

also leadership positions and will be empowered to lead work and drive growth in the district in ways the other positions have not been able to. The creation of the Assistant Principal position also shifts more capacity into the buildings, closer to students and staff.

Q21. What will be in the best interest of students and taxpayers?

The administrative team believes that the proposed positions will be the most effective way to improve student outcomes. We are conscious of the costs, and we were careful to not just look at what we need to add, but also what we could eliminate. That is why we have proposed replacing the Communications and Family Engagement Specialist and Faculty Resident positions with the Assistant Principals and the AIDE Director, rather than just adding more positions without any reductions.

General Budget Questions

Q22. The website update sounds crucial – can we wait? Do we intend to use the website as a primary communications tool? Can it be more cell phone friendly?

It is crucial, because our current content management system (CMS) will shut down in 2025 (the vendor has not committed to a specific month yet.) and we will need to do something. We will pursue alternative funding, potentially end of the year funding. The ongoing cost of the current CMS is already in the operating budget, so we may potentially be able to find a lower cost or cost-neutral solution, but that may involve trade-offs in functionality.

The easiest option would be to roll into the company's other CMS product, however, we will likely be on this platform for years, so we will evaluate multiple options to find the one that best meets our needs within our available funding. Functionality on mobile devices will definitely be a consideration, and we would love to hear more about the specific ways the current website is not user-friendly on cell phones, as this is probably the most important platform in 2024. Available budget will certainly be a factor in which options we consider.

The website has an important role, but we likely wouldn't categorize it as a "primary" communications tool anymore. The days of people checking a school (or any) website every day or week for updates are gone. Today, email and SMS are our "primary" communications channels. Effectively leveraging social media is also a growth area for the district. The website's heaviest current use is as a repository of information and resources that are accessed as needed - calendars, lunch menus, and forms are the most popularly accessed content on the site. This is particularly true now that most digital classwork happens through Google Classroom or Seesaw, rather than classroom webpages. The other important function of the website is as a "brochure" for prospective families, staff, and community members.

Q23. Is there data on supporting admin staff that is comparable throughout districts? Special ed leaders, interventionists, content specialists etc.?

Unfortunately, DESE's datasets available to us through their RADAR and Edwin Analytics tools are not granular enough to make clear comparisons in those specific areas. Additionally, there is a lot of nuance in how districts report positions. For example curriculum department heads are reported as instructional staff in some districts, administrators in others, and instructional or curricular support elsewhere. These reporting differences also make it difficult to make comparisons at the level of specificity.

Q24. As part of a more robust decision-making process, I'd like to see implications of FY25 decisions on future District budgets. We are looking at potentially increased debt payments in Lincoln and DoDEA contract negotiations.

This year's budget request would become the base of future budgets. One consideration may be that if we don't address the administrative capacity issues in FY25, but instead allocate those resources elsewhere, when we do address those issues in a future budget year, we may have to make cuts elsewhere in that year.

Q25. The other broad concerns I have are:

- 1) the large amounts of money in "reserves," particularly in the Lincoln budget, and**
- 2) the potential implications of proposing a deficit Hanscom budget.**

The Lincoln actual budget has regularly come in under the projected budget by year-end, which has led to money being transferred back to the town. The Hanscom School maintains an ongoing reserve that accrues when the actual budget comes in under the contract budget in a given year. The current Hanscom reserve is capable of covering the negative variance between the contracted amount and the proposed budget amount for FY25.

When developing the budget, there is a conscious effort to project expenses as accurately as possible, while erring on the side of being conservative. We plan to continue to identify ways to minimize discrepancies between projected budgets and actual budgets, while maintaining an overall conservative mindset to guard against the possibility of going over budget in a given year.

Lincoln Budget

Q26. We heard other needs from the principals the other night:

- a. Preschool still stressed by vacancies and demands for evaluations and looking to a tuition increase**

The Preschool continues to work to fill open ESP positions and this does remain a challenge. We anticipate a proposal for a tuition increase will be made later this Spring.

- b. Middle School priority request for an interventionist to help with instructional differentiation – a request we also hear from parents of middle schoolers. Is it true that Lincoln's 6-8 are the only students without this service? Is there a drop in engagement/achievement when students hit 6 th grade?**

Both at Hanscom and Lincoln we do not have dedicated intervention staffing, which is not unusual at the Middle School level. We continue to determine the best ways to serve our Middle School students and are actively looking at ways to effectively use our

existing staffing to provide students with the support and challenge they need.

- c. If we agree to the wisdom of retaining 4 middle school faculty per grade for 3 sections, then can we re-allocate some of the unused teacher-time to help with administrative stress?**

As elaborated on in Q13 above, the staffing requests are primarily about increasing capacity to achieve the district's goals, rather than alleviating administrator stress. Classroom teachers would not be in an appropriate position to take on most of the leadership responsibilities we discussed above. However, we are actively investigating how to most effectively utilize all existing FTEs.

Q27. Why do we carry \$85K for Minuteman HS bus when we have no students enrolled? Another "reserve?"

The Transportation Revolving Fund is carrying the cost for one single bus as a precaution to needing to provide transportation should student(s) enroll. There currently is one student enrolled and the Town is covering the nominal mileage reimbursement cost to the parent.

Q28. Kindergarten reserve in the base budget still troubles me.

The district has had the practice of holding in reserve one teaching position. In addition, there is a long-standing agreement with the Town Finance Committee that if the district cannot fund a needed classroom teaching position within the existing budget, the district may request a reserve fund transfer from the Town.

Q29. The narrative for the electricity budget confuses me, too. Why are we discussing the mods?

The utility budget does not yet reflect the operations of the solar panels. Therefore the only experience we have to measure against is the total cost of utilities from FY21 to FY23 to make an estimate. The Modulators were part of the utility costs in FY21 and FY22.

Q30. What does the \$458,850 in FY24 represent? How have we calculated the \$496,650 "risk exposure?" Are we holding the entire \$496,650 risk exposure in our base budget? Can we assume at least some portion of that belongs in "above guidance" or in the FinCom Emergency Reserve? Is there a real possibility that the solar won't come on in FY25? When will we have more information?

The utility budget is not able to be calculated since the solar panels are not yet operational and

functioning as initially planned. Therefore, our overall costs are virtually unknown at this time.

Q31. Yet we have no reserve for potential expenses if the Community Center project begins in FY25.

The Community Center project should not impact the School Department as we understand the scope of work. In all likelihood, the operating budget exposure potential would occur in FY26 or when the project begins to mobilize and break ground. The bigger potential exposure is if the project doesn't move forward and we have to address maintenance and equipment replacement of the pods over the next 5-10 years. These potential costs would largely be capital and are reflected in the long term capital plan.

Hanscom Budget

Q32. On page 4, the Preliminary Budget shows a budget gap of \$585,242, but no transfer from the reserve to cover it. Then on page 42, it says, "This budget request projects a need for additional resources for operations from the Hanscom Reserve Fund."

The School Committee is the only authority to approve the use of the Hanscom Reserve. We are making this request to the School Committee as part of the budget proposal.

Q33. When was the last time -- if ever -- we proposed a deficit Hanscom budget? Did we cover the gap with the Hanscom Reserve then?

The FY24 Budget is technically also a budget that is over the FY24 Hanscom Contract amount. At the time of the vote of the Budget in March 2023, the School Committee voted approval of a budget for FY24 that was over the contract amount, and balanced the budget by also approving the use of \$144,000 from the Hanscom Reserve to cover a gap between the contract amount and the budget request.

Q34. When will we have a look at the Collins report on the Hanscom Reserve?

We expect to have the report available in early April.

Q35. The narrative says the overage is due to increased student services, but I thought we were told that adding Bridges and Foundations could be done within the existing budget. What happened?

Both Bridges and Foundations were approved after the School Committee completed its budget process with Town Meeting in March 2023. Bridges was funded by reallocating resources from known retirements. Foundations is being funded with short term savings from turnover of positions that have gone vacant. Both of these programs will have to be fully funded for FY25, in addition to the FY24 positions that were vacant and used to fund them in FY24.

Q36. Also, the budget narrative says we include \$400K for GASB. Have we proposed including GASB in previous base budgets? We used to make an end-of-year transfer for GASB from Hanscom Reserve, but I wonder, was it included in the contract price? If not, is now -- the last year of the contract – the time to change? I’m confused.

In FY23 and FY24 the School Department began to permanently fund the \$400,000 rather than make a transfer at the close of the fiscal year with available funds. It is prudent to fund our employee obligations first (Health Insurance, Retiree benefits, etc) prior to the rest of the budget. Prioritizing these funds ahead of the rest of the budget requests is a sound budget management practice.

Q37. What are the implications of proposing a \$585K deficit budget?

The Hanscom Reserve has a projected fund balance of approximately \$7.5M at the close of the FY25 Contract Year. This includes the use of the \$585K needed to fulfill the requests for the final contract year. It also leaves funds for addressing recommendations from the Collins Center report and some of the unfunded liabilities.

Q38. What is on the margin if we must or want to cut expenses to stay within the contract price?

4.15% of the operating budget

Q39. How much of the increase in professional salaries over FY24 is due to Bridges and Foundations? How did we pay for them this year? Can we say how much those programs save in outside serves (not to mention higher quality service?)

The anticipated annual cost of salaries for Bridges and Foundations for FY24 is approximately \$183,000 plus classroom supplies and materials to set up the classrooms. These base level expenses were not identified as part of the FY24 original budget. The funds to support this expenditure in FY24 are being identified through salary savings and other identified funds as they become known (please see the answer to question 35 above).

For FY25, these costs are new and must be built as part of the resetting of the base. The funds used in FY24 were only one time or single use funds.

Q40. Does this budget include making the interim assistant principal position a permanent post? What if we extended the interim status?

This budget proposal would make the interim position permanent. If it remained interim in FY25 it would likely remain filled next year, and might then be brought back as a request in the FY26 budget.

Q41. Is the need for the 9.08 additional FTEs (most for student services) a blip in the student population, or does DoDEA anticipate increasingly higher needs for students arriving at Hanscom in the future? Have we sought evidence that this may be a result of DoDEA policies?

The number of 9.08 came from the original contract estimate for the number of staff estimated. We are continuing to work on estimating the impact of the increase in the OOD Student population and special education costs and how they might change in the future.

Q42. "Salaries-other" also has gone up 56% since FY21 – has the number of employees in this category increased that much? Did we anticipate that? Will it hold after negotiating new Contracts?

There are two factors impacting this increase. The first is the unionizing of the ESPs and the recent Custodial Union contract agreement. The second is the increase in the number of FTEs in the ESP unit between FY21 and projected for FY25.

Q43. Why does the Transfers-benefits line go up in FY24, then down in FY25 even though salaries go up substantially? Is it likely that final calculations will raise this amount?

The \$144K is the Reserve Allocation approved by School Committee and not yet distributed.

Q44. Contract Services show a tripling of expenses (\$419K to \$1.3 million) since FY21 – are we serving that many more students than we predicted? Are we counting these expenses differently? My understanding is we began to receive a special education transportation reimbursement at some point – where does that show? If so, are we decreasing other accounts? Are reimbursements applied in a new way? How do we explain this?

The increase in contracted services is due to OOD Transportation and the practice of prepayments which ended in FY22. OOD Transportation in FY 22 was \$372,295 for

approximately 17 students. It is projected to be \$573,007 in FY25 for approximately 31 students. A small portion of the change is for IEP services, and Software Licensing increases (e.g. LEXIA)

Q45. Is it economical to hire an occupational therapist for the current high level of need when we cannot anticipate the needs in the future? Is there evidence that the need will remain this high? Or could we create an interim position?

The needs for an Occupational Therapist across the district has varied at times. We have, in the past, hired a Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant to cover when increased needs have risen. At other times, when the caseload has reduced, we have eliminated the position. While there is always going to be a need for an Occupational Therapist, the caseload numbers can vary depending on the student population so this is an important question to consider. The reason why the position has been requested as a full time position to retain over time is that we have, over the past year, developed in-district programming to support students with a higher level of need. Given student needs have risen within the Hanscom School the needs in relation to OT have also risen. We foresee that because we have an increase in programming and the ability to keep higher needs students in-district our needs related to OT will also rise. We do not see a time, in the near future, when needs will decline despite the variability of students who move in and out of Hanscom.

Additionally, it should be taken into account that we have had an increase in requests for Occupational Therapy evaluations, particularly through Early Intervention but also in early elementary school over the past three years. We have used resources across the district but also have had to use Contracted Services to complete these evaluations. While this has been sufficient in covering the evaluations, it is not the best approach to evaluations for various reasons, including the continuity of care. Each year, the student services department will evaluate caseloads and needs in relation to occupational therapy. If there comes a time when this position is not needed as the caseload can be served and evaluations can be completed with less staffing, we would look to reduce the position or leave it vacant.

Q46. Resident Question: I was just reviewing the FY25 budget and I noticed that the presentation of school expenses had been slimmed down from what was presented in prior years. In particular, I was hoping to review the progression of benefit expenses at the Hanscom School, but I noticed the historical numbers presented then and now are different. The actual numbers presented this year are ~\$400-550,000 higher. See the screenshots below:

FY25 budget

CATEGORY	DESE OBJ	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Revised	FY25 Preliminary
PERSONNEL	01 Salaries Professional	\$7,714,408	\$7,909,460	\$8,258,261	\$8,866,454	\$9,412,106
	02 Salaries Secretarial and Clerical	\$414,911	\$424,255	\$444,660	\$487,067	\$485,954
	03 Salaries Other	\$1,464,745	\$1,738,160	\$1,946,084	\$1,995,090	\$2,290,992
	09 Transfers – Benefits	\$2,051,991	\$1,977,000	\$2,165,415	\$2,405,883	\$2,249,948

FY24 budget book

Expense Category	FY20 Actual	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Final	FY 24 Preliminary	Vaiance
Administrator Salaries	940,611	971,780	1,013,184	1,023,193	1,035,245	12,052
• Professional Regular salaries	6,373,963	6,672,602	6,924,516	7,422,265		
• Stipends (leadership & mentoring)	232,126	239,708	253,624	280,087		
• Substitutes (daily & long-term)	82,764	108,085	175,000	185,000		
• Misc. Salaries (see note 1)	417,797	78,040	143,771	346,765		
• Special Education Tutors	468,229	367,692	450,893	562,924		
• Instructional Assistants	331,117	264,380	344,826	342,300		
• Other paraprofessionals	90,142	94,901	113,443	93,136		
• Secretaries	390,385	406,766	415,481	462,277		
• Facilities, Maintenance & Custodial Staff	577,589	616,033	638,640	718,864		
• Overtime	14,117	17,811	17,800	17,800	17,800	
Professional & Staff Development	31,473	34,265	58,216	69,240	69,240	0
Benefits	1,624,465	1,651,991	1,608,000	1,763,705	1,861,883	98,178

Personnel Costs
are hidden
pending
outcome of
negotiations

Is this a matter of the FY25 category being broader than FY24's and therefore not comparable, or have the actual benefit expenses at Hanscom been revised higher since last year? Would it be possible to share the budgets with the same level of detail as what was presented in previous years please?

It is a matter of the reporting being more inclusive of what was expended from the Reserve in each of the years of the current contract (FY21 to FY25). Details are available in the table below.

Reconciliation to FY24 Budget Document		FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Budget	FY24 Preliminary Budget
		1,651,991	1,608,000	1,763,705	1,861,883
		Actual with Reserve	Actual with Reserve	Actual	Final Budget
	to FY25 Preliminary Budget	2,051,991	1,977,000	2,165,415	2,405,883
Variance to Report					
Account was not included in prior reports	TRANSF TO OTHER TR FUND - RESERVE	400,000	400,000		
FY22 Budget Column labeled incorrectly. It reflected budget and not actuals in Insurance Programs			(31,000)		
Account was not included in FY24 budget	OTHER POST EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS (OPEB)			400,000	400,000
Variance of Budget to Actual	RETIREE HEALTH BENEFITS			1,710	
Variance to Report not allocated to specific accounts in FY24 Revised Budget as it is outside the Contract	SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF USING RESERVE				144,000
		400,000	369,000	401,710	544,000

Special Revenue Funds

Food Services Revolving Account

Q47. What is our budget for Food Services?

Approximately \$600,000

Q48. It is still a revolving account, but how has management of that changed since state funding? Is our grant predictable?

The Food Service Program continues to be a Revolving Fund which is subsidized by the USDA and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. More Information will be available when School Committee has the Special Revenue Fund presentation at the end of January.

Q49. Are we paid in advance, periodically or reimbursed? Is there any data on how many students participate?

We are not paid in advance, we are paid in arrears after submitting claim data. Participation information will be available when SC has the Special Revenue Fund presentation at the end of January.

Q50. If the grant were discontinued in FY25, what are our options for subsidizing lunch prices? Another reserve? I remember the crash in 2020 when we raised private donations to fund free lunches because the shutdown left us with no cash coming in.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Legislature has permanently funded Universal Meals for schools. It will be an act of the Legislature to remove it.

Q51. There have been concerns in the past about equity and retention of food services employees. Does the grant money set standards or guidance in this?

The Food Service Workers are in the process of negotiating their first union contract. The Food Service subsidy from USDA and Commonwealth do not establish a base level of wages other than minimum wage.