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Purpose of School District Budget

What is the role and purpose of the school budget? The school budget—and accompanying process—provides school districts and their leaders with an opportunity to validate the collection and expenditure of public funds.

In its most simple definition, a school budget describes a district's plan for the upcoming year as related to anticipated revenues and expenditures. School budgets allow districts to translate sometimes intangible missions, operations and objectives into reality by outlining and providing specific programs and funding/financial terms.

A school budget helps bridge the gap that can exist between a district's stated goals and resource allocation. The budget process forces the discussion that will make informative decisions among various programs competing for the limited available resources.

The District recognizes a gap exists between the critically needed programs and services and the alignment of available resources. The District further recognizes that a gap exists between the desired level of funding and the capacity of the community to sustain the need over time. Yet, the District firmly believes it has a moral and legal obligation to seek funding that will address the diversity of student needs if the District and community are truly committed to the principle of educating all children to the highest level possible.

As William Hartman writes, key steps of the school budget process include, "...establishing the district's objectives and priorities; allocating resources; involving the public through budget hearings, school board decisions and other means of representative democracy; and, in some states, conducting budget elections." (Hartman, 1999).

The District's Leadership Team has worked diligently to identify the human resources and other resources needed to further develop the capacity of the District to move forward in accomplishing the goals of the Dover School District's Strategic Plan with the primary aim to continually improve and optimize student learning and achievement.

Budget Introduction

It is imperative the District's Strategic Plan and Fiscal Year 2021 Budget and future fiscal years align to provide the resources to accomplish the four strategic goals. The district goals are inclusive of strategies establishing the actions that must be accomplished to achieve the strategic goals. To guide the scope of work associated with the implementation of the goals, annual implementation and accountability plans have been established for the academic year 2019-2020. The 2019-2020 academic year represents the second year of the implementation of the Dover School District's Strategic Plan.

The implementation plans will be assessed at the conclusion of the academic year 2019-2020 providing the necessary feedback needed to develop the 2020-2021 implementation and accountability plan. It is also recognized that the strategic goals will need to be addressed in increments to allow for the realistic implementation and accomplishment of the strategies and to provide adequate funding that lead to the goals accomplishment.

District Goals & Objectives

The Dover School District Administration presents the initial FY 2021 Budget with budget priorities aligned to the District's Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan establishes the district's direction and the priorities for a five-year period. The four major goals of the Strategic Plan are:

Goal 1: The Dover School District will improve educational outcomes for students by effectively engaging with the broader community.

Goal 2: The Dover School District will develop and sustain a culture that is characterized by optimizing social, emotional, civic, physical, and rigorous academic learning.

Goal 3: The Dover School District is committed to continued investments in infrastructure to support student learning inclusive of facilities, technology, and safety-security.

Goal 4: The Dover School District will recruit, hire, develop and retain effective and caring educators and support them in their growth as a strong school community.

The priority areas for the implementation of the Dover School District Strategic Plan in 2020-2021 are:

OBJECTIVE 1.1 – STUDENT VOICE: We will enhance student voice by creating a student-driven environment that allows students to have meaningful input and choice into their learning program.

OBJECTIVE 1.2 – STUDENT SUPPORT AND WELLNESS: We will enhance the support and wellness of all students through purposeful engagement in school and community-based activities.

OBJECTIVE 1.5 - COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND PARTICIPATION: We will provide opportunities for diverse community stakeholders to engage with the Dover schools in shared problem solving and decision making.

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OBJECTIVE 2.1 – SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL: We will promote and support the overall health and well-being of all students and staff.

OBJECTIVE 2.2 – STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING: We will maximize each student's engagement in learning.

OBJECTIVE 2.3 – STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT – We will optimize individual achievement ensuring every student receives academic instruction that is culturally responsive and matched to developmental needs.

OBJECTIVE 2.4 – COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION: We will optimize student learning and achievement by developing and implementing a competency-based education model.

More from Your Public Schools

Jamie Vollmer, an advocate for public schools, has effectively demonstrated that public schools are increasingly being asked to do more beyond the traditional reading, writing, and arithmetic. Goal 2 of the Dover School District Strategic Plan illustrates this point - ***The Dover School District will develop and sustain a culture that is characterized by optimizing social, emotional, civic, physical, and rigorous academic learning.*** This is an ambitious goal that requires the essential human resources support by continual professional learning and instructional resources to be achieved.

Throughout the nation, schools are confronted with students that are coming to school with a variety of complex needs related to social and emotional growth. It is critical that the Dover schools continue to develop a comprehensive system of services and programs that address the developmental and learning needs of all students in a holistic and systematic manner. This will require additional human resources and continuing professional development to have the capacity to address the changing and complex needs of today's students.

During the past two budget seasons, the District has made strides in restoring and adding personnel, but additional resources are needed to further develop the District's capacity to fully implement competency-based education, support healthy and holistic development of all students, and provide the essential support services. The District has compelling needs and a moral and legal obligation to equip all students with the skills and attributes to prepare them to achieve their post-secondary goals, to be continual learners, to be engaged in purposeful vocations, and to contribute to the welfare of their family and community.

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Board Priorities

From the initial discussion of budget priorities, the Board identified the following priorities for Fiscal Year 2021:

1. Maintain a primary focus on the full implementation and achievement of the literacy goal.
2. Increase teaching positions to decrease student to teacher ratios.
3. Replace and/or upgrade technology, inclusive of new devices and the necessary staffing to support and to accommodate and use the new devices and maintain a highly functional system.

Leadership Team Priorities

The Leadership Team was requested to identify needs that would improve the school's capacity to provide the essential programs and services to develop and sustain a culture characterized by optimizing social, emotional, civic, physical and rigorous academic learning. Throughout the budget discussions with the Leadership Team and the identification of need, the following priorities were identified **(note: the listing is not hierarchal):**

1. **To maintain a primary focus on the full implementation and achievement of the literacy goal and to increase the effectiveness of Tier 1 core instruction in literacy.**
   a. To expand the Fountas and Pinnell curriculum materials to grades three and four supported with professional development.

   b. To expand Fundations to grade three, supported with professional development.

2. **To provide adequate staffing to have the capacity to achieve the following:**
   a. To create a comprehensive student support system in order to develop and sustain a culture that promotes and supports the social and emotional development of all students.

   b. To provide the necessary staffing to support the following instructional programs:
      - Additional instructional staff at Dover High School for music, science, and library.

      - Additional instructional staff at Dover Middle School to release counselors from the related arts rotation in order to increase the capacity to address student needs. In addition, a library paraprofessional to release the librarian for library instruction and maintain an open library throughout the day.

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- Additional instructional staff at Dover Regional CTC to address the growing numbers of students electing CTE programs in building construction, health science, and sport medicine.

3. **To increase the capacity of the Technology Department to expand and maintain the District's new network and address the technology needs of teachers, students, support staff, and administrators.**
   a. The addition of 3.0 IT Technicians to provide direct support to all schools.

   b. The addition of 1.0 IT Technician to work with assistive technology.

4. **The core business of the Dover School District is student learning. It is critical to the District's students that continual improvement of student learning and achievement be a hallmark of the District. This requires that the District be a learning organization where the focus is on the continual improvement and learning. It is essential that the capacity of the Teaching and Learning Department is expanded. The following are identified to increase the capacity of the Teaching and Learning Department:**

   a. Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning - to increase the capacity of the Teaching and Learning Department to develop and implement competency-based education and align curriculum and instruction throughout the District. This will increase the capacity to supervise and monitor the development and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

   b. Dover Middle School Dean of Instruction - to increase the middle school's capacity to focus and align curriculum and instruction in a competency-based learning system. This will align the Dover Middle School with the administrative structure of Dover High School and will increase the capacity to supervise and monitor the development and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

   c. Additional elementary instructional coach - to support math and science. To date, the introduction of instructional coaches has been well received. The coaches are demonstrating the effectiveness of embedding professional development and support directly into the teaching and learning system. With the additional instructional coaches, the three elementary schools will be serviced by 2 literacy coaches and 2 math and science coaches.

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NOTE: Dr. Allen Odden demonstrates in his book School Finance A Policy Perspective that instructional coaches are vastly effective in strengthening instruction in the schools. Odden indicates, "Earlier research from qualitative studies found strong effect sizes (1.25-2.71) for coaches as part of professional development. Furthermore, Odden states, "The staffing formula for such positions is 1 instructional coach for every 200 students. This translates into 2.25 FTE facilitators for the 450-student prototypical elementary school, 2.25 FTE facilitators for the 450-student middle school, and 3.0 FTE facilitators for the 600-student high school."

d. Additional middle school instructional coach - with the additional coach, the middle school will be serviced by three instructional coaches.

5. **To have the necessary support staff to increase capacity and effectively operate the support system, the following positions are recommended:**

   a. Increases in the Dover Middle School Office Staff inclusive of additional hours and/or days for the front office, nurse's office, and dean's office.

   b. Additional nurse administrative assistant to serve the three elementary schools. This will permit records to be maintained in a more uniformed and consistent manner.

   c. Dover High School study hall supervisors to release teachers for instructional purposes.

   d. Increase in office support for the Dover Regional CTC.

   e. Increase hours for the administrative assistant at Bellamy Academy to allow for office coverage throughout the day.

6. **To adequately staff the Dover High School and Athletic Programs to improve supervision and safety of the programs. The Athletic Programs have been dependent on volunteer coaches. It is becoming more difficult to recruit volunteer coaches. The following positions are being proposed to provide adequate supervision and to improve the overall safety of the athletic programs:**

   a. DHS Assistant Boys and Girls Cross Country Coach
   b. DMS Assistant Boys and Girls Cross Country Coach
   c. Boys and/or Girls Assistant Swimming and Diving Coach
   d. Boys and Girls Alpine Ski Team Coach

e. Middle School Girls JV and Varsity Volleyball Coaches
f. Middle School Field Hockey JV/Assistant Coaches
g. Girls Gymnastic Coach

7. **To be able to effectively recruit and retain substitute teachers in the District. The following increases are recommended:**

   a. Certified Teacher from $85 per day to $90 per day.
   b. Non-Certified Teacher would remain at $75 per day.
   c. Nurse and Long-Term Certified Teacher from $95 per day to per diem DTU Bachelors, Step One or $211.86 per day. (Must be NH Certified and assignment must be 20 consecutive days or more.)
   d. Long-Term Non-Certified Teacher from $95 per day to $125 per day. (Assignment must be 20 consecutive days or more.)

Alignment of Strategic Goals 1 and 2

Strategic Goal One: ***The Dover School District will improve educational outcomes for students by effectively engaging with the broader community.***

Strategic Goal Two: ***The Dover School District will develop and sustain a culture that is characterized by optimizing social, emotional, civic, physical, and rigorous academic learning. The core purpose of the District is student learning and achievement.***

For all learners to be successful, the appropriate programs and services must be provided to support the learning of all students. Student learning encompasses not only the core academics, but encompasses the emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of the student. It is essential the District has the financial resources to educate the diversity of students and the whole-learner and to prepare all students to achieve their post-secondary goals, to be continual learners, to be engaged in purposeful vocations, and to contribute to the welfare of their family and community.

The Dover School District is not performing at the expected levels of an exceptional school district on the most recent state assessment for English Language Arts and math. This is only one indicator but demonstrates the lack of district resources to provide continual professional learning as well as the proper instructional resources. Most importantly, the curriculum and instructional personnel needed to design, implement, and support the district's curriculum.

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The research has demonstrated that if students are not proficient readers (reading at or above grade level) at the end of third grade their future educational endeavors will be limited. A third grader exiting third grade, who is not reading at grade level, has only a 1 in 7 chance of being an effective reader; and at the end of fourth grade, a 1 in 11 chance. As demonstrated, in the recent state assessment, the Dover School District has a cohort of students not reading at grade level. As we move forward, it is essential that all students are proficient readers at the conclusion of third grade.

The aim of the Dover School District must be student success that allows all students to learn and to achieve at high levels. The District can no longer be satisfied with pockets of excellence or rest on what has been accomplished in the past, we must strive for excellence in every area with a laser focus on student learning and achievement. Being good will no longer be an option for the Dover School District. Excellence must be the priority for all students. The right thing to do is to prepare all students to perform at high levels regardless of state assessment.

As reflected in the Dover School District Strategic Plan, the Dover School District has challenging work ahead of us as we pursue the course of competency-based education with a student-centered focus guided by student voice and engaged learners. It will require change, leadership and commitment at the community, board level, district level, school level, and classroom level, as well as the financial resources to accomplish an ambitious agenda for the success of all students.

Over the years, due to tight budgets and other priorities, the District has made significant reductions in the core business of student learning and achievement. It is essential the District continue to focus on providing:

- The necessary and essential human resources to accomplish the Strategic Plan;
- Essential and ongoing professional learning to continually train district and school educators to effectively implement the District's educational programs; and
- Instructional resources to support the learning endeavors of all students.

The Fiscal Year 21 Budget continues the work of addressing the District's literacy needs. The Fountas and Pinnell Classroom was adopted for grades K through 4 with the implementation of it in grades K-2 in the 2019-2020 school year, to be followed with the purchasing of the Fountas and Pinnell Classroom for grades 3 and 4 in the Fiscal Year 21 Budget.

In addition, the District adopted Fundations which was implemented in grades K-2 in the 2019-2020 school year to be followed with the purchasing of Fundations for grade 3 in the Fiscal Year 21 Budget.

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With the two purchases in Fiscal Year 21, the instructional materials will be secured to support a comprehensive literacy program for the elementary schools. It is critical that the program is supported with the appropriate professional development. The use of literacy coaches is continued in the Fiscal Year 21 Budget. The literacy coaches also increase the potential of sustaining the literacy initiative with continual support of veteran teachers and training of new teachers as they enter the system.

A school district's programs and services are implemented by people who are the major resource of a school district. In a white paper prepared by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), 80% to 85% of a school district's budget is committed to wages and associated benefits. For the Dover Schools, personnel represent 66.8% of the budget with the inclusion of debt service and 73.8% without. *(Debt service is the payment of principal and interest on long-term bonds for school capital improvement projects and is part of the general fund operating budget.)*

Leadership and support services are required at the district and school levels. Today's principals deal with a variety of complex issues inclusive of long and short-term school management tasks and instructional/transformational leadership. John Hattie defines instructional leadership as ***a focus on creating a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives, and high teacher expectations for teachers and students.***

Hattie continues by defining transformational leadership as ***principals who engage with their teaching staff in ways that inspire them to new levels of energy, commitment, and moral purpose such that they work collaboratively to overcome challenges and reach ambitious goals.*** Deans provide the essential support to assist principals in instructional and transformational leadership. The SAU Leadership Team provides additional support by leading and coordinating initiatives related to instruction and transformation. The FY 21 budget proposal will provide additional leadership positions to provide a laser focus on student learning and achievement and accountability.

The budget proposals propose positions to support and sustain the District's design and implementation of competency-based education and aligned curriculum.

The proposed budget provides the additional human resources to develop a solid foundation of the essential and necessary human resources to support the academic, social and emotional learning and well-being of all students.

For Dover schools to be highly successful in having all students learn and achieve, highly effective educators and support staff are required. The retention of qualified and effective educators and support staff contribute to the quality, effectiveness, and stability of the district's schools.

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The proposed budget provides additional funding for professional learning using instructional coaches. For the 2020-2021 school year and Fiscal Year 2021 budget the proposed additional coaching positions:

- 1.0 FTE District K-4 Math and Science Instructional Coach
- 1.0 FTE Dover Middle School Coach

The Teaching and Learning Department are the core business of the District. It is essential the leadership of this department is further strengthening with additional leadership to support the design and implementation of competency-based education as well as leadership to continually improve the alignment of instruction and assessment. The following leadership positions are being proposed:

- 1.0 FTE Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning
- 1.0 FTE Dover Middle School Dean of Instruction – The additional position will allow for a dedicated person to oversee teaching and learning at Dover Middle School and provide support to the three Dover Middle School instructional coaches.

Alignment to Strategic Goal Three

The Dover School District is committed to continued investments in ***infrastructure to support student*** *learning inclusive of facilities,* ***technology, and safety-security.***

Beyond the educational focus, the district provides services associated with maintenance, transportation, food service and the daily operations of the school district. These services are essential as they directly impact services to students. It is essential that funding is provided to properly maintain clean, healthy, and safe facilities for student learning. It is recognized that investment in the proper maintenance of schools impacts the longevity of the facility.

The following items are also being proposed and are not reflected in the FY2021 Level Funded with Obligations Budget:

- In FY20, a ½ PM run was added at Dover Middle School. It will need to be determined if this will be needed. Estimated cost is $37,406.

- Homeless transportation budget increased based on prior three-year average for an estimated increase of $20,000.

- Legal fees' budget increased based on prior three-year average for an estimated increase of $10,000.

- CIP Projects to be budgeted under the General Fund Operating Budget:
  - ✓ DMS Locker Relocation Project, estimated cost: $40,000. Over time, the project will create flexible learning space at Dover Middle School.
  - ✓ Comprehensive Facilities/Space Needs Study, estimated cost: $50,000. This project is part of the Strategic Plan. The administration recommends the District move forward with this project during the 2020-2021 academic year.
  - ✓ Furniture Replacement Districtwide, estimated cost: $25,000. Purpose to maintain safe and functional furniture throughout the District.

The District Demographics

Today's schools are confronted with complex societal issues that impact today's families and students. Schools for generations have reflected the strong middle-class values of the American society, and the composition of families and the issues they face are ever changing. The shifts in our society and American schools is also reflected in the Dover Schools. The demographic directly affects the resources needed to support the success of all students. Students come to the Dover schools with diverse backgrounds and experiences. In 2018-19, the District had:

- 27.89% of Dover students eligible for the free/reduced school lunch program.

- 718 students, 18% of Dover students enrolled are IDEA eligible (not inclusive of pre-school). If, Barrington and Nottingham students are included, students receiving special education services increases to 20%.

- 295 students had 504 Plans (Including Barrington and Nottingham).

- 543 students are supported by a health plan (51), allergy (156), asthma (194), temp/injury (54), swallow/feeding (10), and other (68). This represents 13 percent of our population on health plans that require monitoring by school RNs. This number does not include general illness or medication visits that occur daily.

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- 118 students representing a minimum of 20 different languages receive English as a Second Language (ESL) services.

- Currently, students accessing LADC Support (Licensed Alcohol Drug Counselor) – Dover High School-18, Dover Middle School-6, and Bellamy Academy-2. Currently, during the 2019-2020 school year, LADC services are averaging 24.5 hours per week. At DHS there are 4 students participating in a weekly support group.

- 180 students are living in government supported housing.

- Homeless students (not inclusive of Barrington and Nottingham students).
  - ✓ 2019-2020 – 43 – 1.16% (As of December 3, 2019)
  - ✓ 2018-2019: 78 – 1.95%
  - ✓ 2017-2018: 127 – 3.17%
  - ✓ 2016-2017: 86 – 2.24%
  - ✓ 2015-2016: 92 – 2.41%
  - ✓ 2014-2015: 108 – 2.87%

THE CURRENT SPECIAL EDUCATION DATA

Caseloads by School

➢ Dover High School:	1:26
➢ Dover Middle School:	1:18
➢ Garrison School:	1:18
➢ Horne Street School:	1:17
➢ Woodman Park School:	1:17
➢ Pre-K	1:19
➢ **Recommended Caseload**	**1:15**

Percentage of Students Receiving Special Education Services by Grade Level

➢ Kindergarten:	11% - 29 Students
➢ First Grade:	14% - 33 Students
➢ Second Grade:	20% - 53 Students
➢ Third Grade:	17 % - 47 Students
➢ Fourth Grade:	18% - 51 Students

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- **Subtotal** — **16% - 213 Students**
- Fifth Grade: — 23% - 51 Students
- Sixth Grade: — 23% - 67 Students
- Seventh Grade: — 18% - 47 Students
- Eighth Grade: — 21% - 65 Students
- **Subtotal** — **21% - 230 Students**
- Ninth Grade: — 23% - 91 Students
- Tenth Grade: — 12% - 48 Students
- Eleventh Grade: — 38 % - 12 Students
- Twelfth Grade: — 9% - 31 Students
- **Subtotal:** — **14% - 208 Students**

FISCAL YEAR 21 BUDGET FORMAT

The Fiscal Year 21 Budget Format has been changed to allow for increased transparency of the FY21 Budget proposal. Individual school and/or departments each have statistical information, as well as all associated cost centers identifying actual FY19 expenses, FY20 Adjusted Budget and Proposed FY21 Budget as of the date of this report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of the proposed Fiscal Year 2021 Budget is a team effort with the assistant superintendents, principals, and directors providing input to Libby Simmons, Business Administrator. It is important for the Board to appreciate the number of hours invested by Ms. Simmons in gathering the budget information and data and developing the budget model for the Board's consideration. As the superintendent, I am highly appreciative of the leadership and guidance that Ms. Simmons brings to the annual budget process.