

FISCAL YEAR 2012 BUDGET STATEMENT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

The Leadership Council of the Belmont Public Schools has been requested to prepare an Available Revenue Budget and a Level Services Budget for Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12).

Simply stated, the FY12 Available Revenue Budget is one that conforms to a targeted, bottom-line dollar amount that is based on funding currently projected to be available to our school district next year. The FY12 Level Services Budget is one which represents funding adequate enough to cover predicted cost increases for existing obligations along with funding critical to ensuring the on-going viability and integrity of the systems, structures, and programs that we currently have in place in the Belmont Public Schools.

Over the last several years, the Belmont Schools have regularly experienced cost obligations that have out-paced funding. In response, expenditures for programs, staff, and supplies have been reduced or eliminated. Underfunding or funding with “rolling blackouts” (on again/off again) has compromised the district’s ability to build the programmatic capacity to guarantee improved learning outcomes for all students. As well, this pattern has depleted the momentum needed to sustain a continuous improvement focus across school programs and educational services.

As the Leadership Council has engaged in the work of budget development for FY12, they have identified investments of almost \$1 million, above the current school year funding level, that are needed in order to counteract the negative impact of recent underfunding and blackouts. The funding gap, then, between the Leadership Council’s recommended FY12 Level Services Budget and the FY12 Available Revenue Budget is approximately \$2.9 million. Given this gap, the funds available for next year are not sufficient to sustain the systems, structures, and programs currently in place. Reductions in programs and services will be required again across the school district in virtually all areas in order to meet the budget target.

It is the opinion of the Leadership Council that the projected FY12 Available Revenue Budget does not provide sufficient resources to ensure the level of quality and services needed in the Belmont Public Schools to prepare all students for the future in the way that the Community expects.

The Leadership Council has worked diligently to identify innovative and creative ways to capture additional cost savings within the organization. We have been guided by the district’s goals and improvement targets to identify reductions so as to impact students in the least adverse manner possible. Even still, the magnitude of cuts required is such that drastic changes

to our current programs have had to be incorporated into the development of this budget proposal. Here is a summary of the impact of a Fiscal Year 2012 Available Revenue Budget:

Elementary Schools

Programs for art and for general music will be eliminated across all schools. Physical education will be reduced by 50%. Additionally, no less than 2 classroom teacher positions will be eliminated (in total, across the 4 schools). The Elementary Library program will remain eliminated. While impact will vary across schools, reductions are identified in the areas of reading support, guidance and nursing services, and instructional aide support, tutorial and clerical services. There will be additional cuts in supplies, textbooks, and equipment accounts across all schools.

Middle School

Foreign language in grades 5 and 6 will be eliminated. No less than 3 additional teaching positions will also be eliminated. Music, fine arts electives and physical education will be targeted for reductions. Tutoring and instructional aide support services will be reduced. There will be further reductions in supplies, textbooks, and equipment.

High School

Teaching positions will be cut as a result of the elimination of elective courses in social studies and foreign language, and changes to teacher course loads in science. Professional librarian support will be eliminated. At least one instructional aide position will be eliminated. Supplies, textbooks, and equipment replacement will be further reduced.

District Wide (Impacting All Schools, Departments and Central Office)

The Curriculum Director (Quality Assurance) positions for foreign language, science, and social studies will now be eliminated, after having been kept vacant this year. Across the district, significant reductions will be made in the number of instructional support positions eligible for health care benefits in FY12. Additional restructuring in the central office will result in the reduction of secretarial and clerical support. Cross country and intramural sports at the middle school and freshmen sports at the high school will not be funded for a second consecutive year. Staff development funding and curriculum development funding will be further reduced. Funds for technology hardware and software will be further reduced.

While the FY12 Available Revenue Budget to be presented may be one of multiple budget iterations, we must be prepared to live with this budget as it is constructed. The budget for the Town of Belmont will continue to be developed and reviewed over the next several months before it is finalized and adopted in the spring by Town Meeting.

The Leadership Council will continue to work hard to advocate for adequate and appropriate funding for the Belmont Schools. It will be the School Committee's responsibility to assess the impact that this preliminary Available Revenue Budget will have on the Belmont Public Schools and, in their advocacy role, respond accordingly.