



## Natick Finance Committee

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 3 of the Town of Natick By-Laws, I attest that the attached copy is the approved copy of the minutes for the following Meeting:

### **Town of Natick Finance Committee**

**Meeting Date: February 9, 2021**

The minutes were approved through the following action:

Motion:	Approved
Made by:	Mr. Scurlock
Seconded by:	Mr. DeLuca
Vote:	3 – 0 – 0
Date:	February 25, 2021

Respectfully submitted,  
Bruce Evans  
Clerk  
Natick Finance Committee

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## **TOWN OF NATICK**

### **Meeting Notice**

POSTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF M.G.L. CHAPTER 30A, Sections 18-25

#### **Natick Finance Committee**

#### **DAY, DATE AND TIME**

February 9, 2021 at 5:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://zoom.us/j/96933630517?](https://zoom.us/j/96933630517?pwd=Q245YUVZc1V6QUdOa0dIZGQyTlVSQT09)

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Meeting ID: 969 3363 0517 Passcode:

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#### **PLACE OF MEETING**

Virtual Meeting

Posted: Friday January 22, 2021, 3:30 PM

#### **MEETING AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
  - a. Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence
  - b. Advisement of Pegasus Live Broadcast and Recording for On-Demand Viewing
  - c. Review of Meeting Agenda and Ordering of Items
2. Announcements
3. Public Comments
  - a. Committee policy & procedures available via this link and also at the meeting location
4. Meeting Minutes
  - a. Review and approve Meeting Minutes for January 14, 26, 2021 and February 2, 2021
5. New Business
  - a. Review NPS SPED/Circuit Breaker Budgets
6. Adjourn

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## Attendees:

### Education & Learning Subcommittee:

Jim Scurlock  
Bruce Evans  
Jeff DeLuca  
Richard Pope

### NPS:

Dr. Anna Nolin, Superintendent, NPS  
Dr. Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent - Finance, NPS  
Mr. Tim Luff, Assistant Superintendent – Student Services, NPS  
Ms. Erin Miller, Director – Student Services, NPS  
Ms. Hillary Hotchkiss, Behavior Analyst (Student Services), NPS

### Mr. Scurlock called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM

*Mr. Evans moved to open the meeting, seconded by Mr. Pope, voted 4 – 0 – 0.*

Mr. DeLuca = yes  
Mr. Evans = yes  
Mr. Pope = yes  
Mr. Scurlock = yes

Public Comments – None

## **Student Services Budget**

### **Presenters: Mr. Luff, Ms. Miller**

Mr. Luff said he would not dwell too much on the mandate information, but would focus on the budget numbers. He noted that Ms. Miller would review the ACHIEVE proposal, as well as some staffing pieces and some other dynamics within the department that we're experiencing this year.

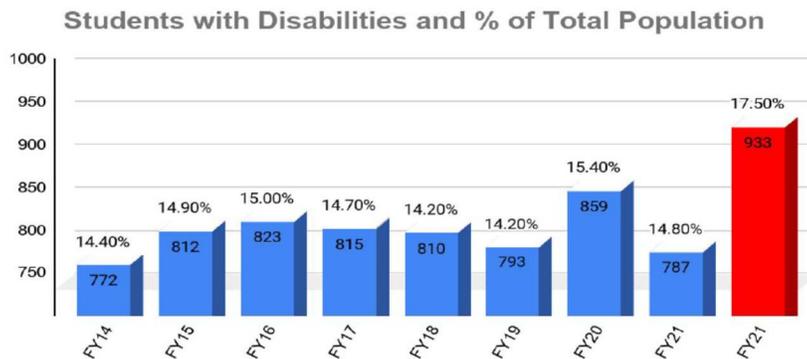
NPS is required to educate all of our students ages 3 – 22 at no cost to the parent and provide them with the magnitude of Special Education services that are designed and outlined in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

NPS must provide the following student services:

- Staffing Requests to implement individualized education plans
- Out of District Costs – tuitions for kids who we cannot educate within NPS
- Circuit Breaker Offset – a revenue use to fund tuitions, is a reimbursement that's provided by the state from the prior year for tuitions that NPS paid. We're assuming reimbursement percentage will be 70% this year. Initially, there was conversation that it could go to 75% our first quarterly check was 70% so our assumption is to go with that rate until something changes.
- Ensuring integrity of In-Districts Special Education Programs – our in-district Special Ed programs are incredibly vital to our programming to ensure that our kids stay here stay educated with their non-disabled peers.
- Collaboration with Department of Teaching, Learning, and Innovation (Inclusion, Least Restrictive Environment) to ensure general education curriculum is at pace and apart in order to not have to identify students' disabilities is incredibly important.
- Other State Requirements-ELL, McKinney Vento, the homeless Education Act for kids who are homeless or in foster care.
- Mental Health Needs for specific students in the district

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- Mass Health – NPS provides some medical services in schools. They are in the form of things like physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, behavioral programming that is required in an IEP. Items that are eligible for reimbursement by MassHealth and Medicaid services are reimbursable; we know they've been reductions in that in the past, so we're looking at it from a revenue source more than anything else.
- Transportation – NPS is required to transport kids to and from their Special Education programming. We certainly transport many of our students in the general education vehicles; however, there are specialized transportation vehicles we use, as well as transportation to out-of-district placements that are required.
- COVID Compensatory Services – Students missed a significant amount of time from March through June of last year, so we are required by state law to make up those services one way or another. We are looking at that through Circuit Breaker funds as an agreement that was had with the town at the end of the budget cycle last year. I don't remember the date. Now, there were so many different times, but we'd agreed to take that out of Circuit Breaker.
- Significant Disproportionality – This focuses on our identification rates of students who are emotionally disabled. And or I think the other one is communication impairment based on their race status. So we're taking a look deeply into that the state of cited assault map
- Transition Services for students who are 18 to 22, we have a requirement to give them appropriate services. And we also have a requirement to start talking about that at age 14. And that's an important IEP service and required by law as well, we do a great job at that. We are proposing enhancing a current program that we've had in the district prior to 2012 when I arrived that goes a long way to not only support these students and give them what they need, but also to do what is legally required for Special Ed services.



- **Blue Counts** based on DESE October 1 Count Data
- **FY21 Actual in Red**----October 1 Count incorrectly reported due to transfer from Esped to Special Programs
- FY21 Actual Percentage in Red--Higher based on a lower number of enrolled students for this School Year
- Increase in numbers impacted by Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation

The blue numbers and the blue graph are our October 1 counts for student disabilities and the percentage of the total population of students that we have in the district. From FY14 to FY21, we have a significant reduction down from 859 to 787. The FY21, however, is not an accurate – it is significantly lower than the actual number, as of February 2021 of 933, as depicted in red. The reason for this is that we switched programs this year from eSPED to PowerSchool Special Programs and in the transfer process, some information was not included and that led to us reporting an

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incorrect figure to DESE. However, this didn't impact any funding for FY22 because we were held harmless at our FY20 number, so we would be looking at a number of 859 for Chapter 70 funding in FY22. It also didn't impact our ability to know who was Special Education and who received an IEP, so all the students who need to receive services are receiving them. We are very concerned about the overall increase in asking why more students are becoming eligible for Special Education services. We have significant questions about our overall response-to-intervention (RTI) implementation. RTI is the step you take before you make a referral for services on kids who are going through different interventions in their classroom, whether it's reading service or executive function service, or mathematics instruction intervention, and we collect data to see if a student is responding to those interventions. And only after they don't do we refer for Special Education and go in the evaluation process. Prior to COVID, the number of students requiring services is already going up, and during COVID, our inability to provide interventions has been problematic due to the hybrid learning environment where we only see the students every other week. In many cases, this has resulted in parent referrals their parents have expressed concerns about their child's mental health and instructional/learning issues that they're seeing. When a parent makes a referral, we are obligated to go into the evaluation process so this has increased the number of Special Ed students. The state percentage of Special Ed services is around 17.5% percent and we are at that mark in FY21. We take that number with a grain of salt, given the fact that our overall enrollment is lower than normal, due to COVID, so the denominator is lower than normal (we have 933 Special Ed students but we're confident that the percentage will decrease lower percentage when we return to full student enrollment. Note that we are going to do detailed analysis of this data, parent referrals, evaluation timeframes, RTIs to identify the reasons behind the increase and ensure that we're only identifying students who are actually disabled, and not due to lack of instruction or lack of intervention. Dr. Nolin added that she provided this information to the teacher's union leadership group and they said that because the hybrid learning environment has caused them to need to spend additional hours with students, they do not have the team time to do the pre-work before a referral occurs, so this is another reason why this number is higher than it is typically.

## 100% of our Students

- Have individualized programming that's based on their specific needs
- Goals and Accommodations

## 83.8% of our Students--Inclusive

- In Class Support
- Co-Teaching
- Learning Centers
- Academic Intensives
- Individualized Instruction

## 8.6% of our Students

Specialized Sub-Separate programs

- Communication (Cognitive)
- Autism
- Language Disabilities
- Emotional/Behavioral
- Integrated PreSchool
- ACHIEVE 18-22

## 7.6% of our Students--OOD

- Specialized Out of District Programming
- 

The above numbers are based on the October 1 numbers, so will be slightly off.

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- All students in SPED have an IEP specifically tailored to their needs, all with goals, accommodations and services and support the student in reaching those goals.
- Most of our students are in an inclusive setting (83.8% of SPED students) with their general appears most of the day, that could be receiving in-class support or it could be a co-taught classroom where we have a general education teacher and a Special Education teacher working together, with the students Special Ed and General Ed learning centers where kids are getting extra support, academic intensives, or maybe they have a disability that's impacting their mathematical calculation skills and they might go into an academic intensive class to focus on that math and individualized instruction.
- A small percentage, (8.6% of SPED students, 160 students), are in our specialized sub-separate programs, which are programs for kids with cognitive impairments, autism, language disabilities, emotional/behavioral disabilities. We have our mandatory integrated preschool to ensure that kids three to five years old receive their mandatory Special Ed services. The ACHIEVE program is our post-secondary (18-22 y.o.) program to ensure that those students receive the required services that they need.
- For those students who we cannot provide for within the NPS for a variety of reasons (7.6% of SPED students), these students receive out-of-district programming.

## 2012-2013

4 Elementary Specialized Programs  
4 Middle School Specialized Programs  
4 High School Specialized Programs  
1 Post Secondary Specialized Program

## 2020-2021

1 PreK Specialized Program  
7 Elementary Specialized Programs  
5 Middle School Specialized Programs  
5 High School Specialized Programs  
1 Post Secondary Specialized Program

At an average cost of \$75K for an OOD program(after Circuit Breaker Reimbursement and including Transport), it could cost more than \$12,000,000 in additional Out of District Expenses to educate these 160 students

This slide shows the expansion of SPED programs over the years and we do this so we can keep kids in NPS with their non-disabled peers to the extent possible. It's important not only because it's the right thing to do but also is the least restrictive setting for these students. The average cost for an out-of-district program is \$75,000 after reimbursement, but some programs can cost up to \$350,000 –\$400,000. This is a rough average based on the reimbursement we get back and what it actually costs the taxpayers after the reimbursement. By teaching these 160 students in sub- separate programs in Natick, we save approximately \$12 million, so although we're doing it because it's the right thing to do. It's also a significant cost savings to the town.

Special education funding sources

**Operating Expenses-** the money appropriated by the town through this budget process

**Circuit Breaker** – This is revenue we receive (in the following year) back from the state for out-of-district tuitions and is 70% reimbursement for anything over the first \$40,000 of cost. If we have an

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out-of-district placement that costs \$50,000, we paid \$10,000 more for this placement a 70% reimbursement is \$7000.

**Prepay** is the ability to pay a portion of added district costs using cost savings from the prior year. This is something that we did not do prior to FY21 and were able to do so as a result of closure in the spring to help balance the budget. We will not have the ability to do that in FY22.

**Preschool tuition revolving account** –partially funds PreK services, using tuition from General Education PreK students.

**Federal grants** that fund Special Education through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). NPS receives approximately \$1.4 million from these plants to be used to fund that we use to fund paraprofessionals and other support staff for Special Education services.

## Student Services Budget

ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	FY20 BUDGET	FY20 ACTUAL	FY21 BUDGET	FY22 REQUEST	FY 21 vs. FY 22 INC/ (DEC)
ASST SUPERINTENDENT PPS -DUES	\$3,000	\$3,495	\$1,500	\$1,695	\$195
ASST SUPERINTENDENT PPS - PHOTOCOPYING	\$1,750	\$0	\$100	\$100	\$0
ASST SUPERINTENDENT PPS - OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$2,000	\$653	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$0
SPED DIRECTOR - OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$5,345	\$2,870	\$4,100	\$4,100	\$0
SPED HOME TUTORS	\$90,000	\$78,462	\$72,000	\$72,000	\$0
VISION/AUDIOLOGICAL/ BCBA SERVICES	\$127,600	\$112,702	\$128,680	\$128,680	\$0
OT/PT/VISION/SPEECH SUPPLIES	\$980	\$173	\$980	\$980	\$0
SEC 504 MEDICAL/THERAPEUTIC SERVICES	\$80,000	\$1,140	\$80,700	\$80,700	\$0
PROF DEVELOPMENT-ACCEPT	\$8,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$0
INSTRUCTIONAL EQUIPMENT	\$10,000	\$8,999	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
PPS FIELD TRIPS	\$450	\$0	\$450	\$450	\$0
SPED TEXT/SOFTWARE/MEDIA MATERIALS	\$50,000	\$48,806	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0
PPS PROF DEVELOPMENT - DUES	\$2,400	\$550	\$750	\$750	\$0
PPS PROF DEVELOPMENT - TRAINING	\$25,100	\$7,857	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$0
SPED TESTING & ASSESSMENT	\$7,000	\$932	\$5,800	\$5,800	\$0
SPED TESTING & ASSESSMENT - SUPPLIES	\$20,000	\$14,411	\$20,000	\$25,059	\$5,059
SYS ATTENDANCE - CENSUS	\$17,000	\$20,408	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$0
SYS HEALTH SERVICES - NURSES	\$18,140	\$6,179	\$10,000	\$18,140	\$8,140
SYS HEALTH SERVICES - PURCHASED SERVICES	\$68,000	\$54,400	\$68,000	\$68,000	\$0
ACHIEVE PROGRAM MATERIALS	\$10,757	\$3,768	\$10,757	\$142,331	\$131,574
ELL INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES			\$2,300	\$0	-\$2,300
<b>SUB-TOTAL PUPIL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$547,522</b>	<b>\$369,805</b>	<b>\$510,117</b>	<b>\$652,784</b>	<b>\$142,667</b>
MA PUBLIC TUITION - OCCUPATIONAL ED	\$81,291	\$54,922	\$48,938	\$31,200	-\$17,738
MA PUBLIC TUITION - SPED	\$46,786	\$47,985	\$47,985	\$0	-\$47,985
NON PUBLIC DAY SCHOOLS	\$2,179,516	\$2,992,285	\$2,501,559	\$2,806,742	\$305,183
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL	\$928,912	\$771,887	\$392,164	\$683,626	\$291,462
COLLABORATIVE SCHOOLS	\$936,525	\$1,632,596	\$842,328	\$1,519,781	\$677,453
<b>SUB-TOTAL TUITIONS</b>	<b>\$4,173,030</b>	<b>\$5,499,675</b>	<b>\$3,832,974</b>	<b>\$5,041,348</b>	<b>\$1,208,374</b>
<b>TOTAL PUPIL SERVICES</b>	<b>4,720,552</b>	<b>5,869,480</b>	<b>4,343,091</b>	<b>5,694,133</b>	<b>1,351,042</b>

## Budget Highlights

- The Pupil Services budget is flat with the exception of the addition of the ACHIEVE Program Materials which we will discuss shortly.
- Tuitions are based on projected needs year-to-year and are increasing by \$1,208,374 as a result of the reduction of the balance in different revolving accounts and the reduction of Circuit Breaker with the reduction of prepay details to be provided in an upcoming slide).

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Student Service Operating FY22 Increase:	\$551,042
Tuitions:	\$408,375
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunity for Student Return in Spring Not Available</li><li>• Only 3 graduates</li><li>• Multiple Move-Ins</li></ul>	
ACHIEVE Proposal:	\$131,574
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rental Costs</li><li>• Supplies</li><li>• Copy Machine</li></ul>	
Health Services	\$8,140
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Error in FY21; Fortunately, due to school closure, normal number of supplies not necessary.</li><li>• Necessary to support nursing services for Full In Person Learning</li></ul>	
Sped Testing and Assessment	\$5059
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 20 Additional iPads for Q-Interactive</li></ul>	
ELL Instructional Service	-\$2300
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allocated in HS Budget for HS ELL</li></ul>	

Operating expenses for Student Services increases by \$551,042:

Tuition Increases:

- \$408,375 of that is due to tuition increases. Several factors are causing this increase in tuitions. Typically, during the end of a school year, we bring some students back from out-of-district can transition them back into the district and we were unable to do that at the end of last year due to COVID, so those kids still remain on the roster for out-of-district placement and they may remain on the roster next year given the present situation. Many families and practitioners feel it's inappropriate to bring kids back into the public school setting right now and it's difficult to do that since it has to be an IEP team decision.
- There are only three students on our tuition list who are either graduating or aging out next year (those moving on from Special Education services. not necessarily high school graduation because they may be 12th graders moving on to post-secondary 18-22 year-old services).
- Multiple move-ins
- ACHIEVE Proposal \$131,574: (Ms. Miller talk about that in more detail) and it includes rental costs for a new location, supplies and a copy/print shop class printer to support this multi-media center. Dr. Nolin said the intent is to be able to do graphic design, create merchandise and paper products to both business opportunities and learning opportunities for these young people.

## Health Services

- In FY21, the health service line was \$8,140 less than the budget – that was an error that we did not realize until we were looking at the budget in October 2020. Fortunately, we did not need it in FY21 because the nurses did not have as many typical nurse visits as they would normally. However, they've been incredibly busy with the work they're doing with COVID but that has been funded in FY21 through grants.
- For FY22, we need to restore the full amount because these grants aren't available as we go back to full in-person learning.

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## SPED Testing and Assessment:

- An increase of \$5,059 resulting from using a new program at the end of last year called QInteractive, a fantastic application that helps us give assessments to our students. It uses two iPads - one for the assessor and one for the child getting assessed and allows them to be six feet away using Bluetooth technology and develop reports seamlessly. This is for the purchase of 20 iPads on which to run QInteractive. These 20 additional iPads are needed augment the number of already purchased iPads to ensure our evaluators have what they need to finish their evaluations in FY22.
- Reduction in ELL instructional service (- \$2,300) because it is reallocated to the high school ELL budget for instructional pieces for English language learners.

## Circuit Breaker Revenue Reduction

Category	Explanation	\$ Amount	Net \$ Amount
FY21 Anticipated Revenue:		\$2,464,940	
FY21 Actual Revenue:	Reduced Reimbursement to 70% (anticipated 75%) Delayed Transportation Reimbursement	\$1,981,890	
FY21 Revenue Difference from Projection:			<b>\$483,050</b>
FY22 Circuit Breaker Revolver Utilization		\$1,900,000	
Anticipated Circuit Breaker FY22 Ending Balance	Recommended ending balance \$800,000		<b>\$214,961</b>

We anticipated FY21 revenue of \$2,464,940; however, actual FY21 revenue was \$1,981,890. There were a few causes of this shortfall: 1) the reimbursement rate that we forecast at 75% came in at 70%; 2) Additional reimbursement that was supposed to come in for out-of-district transportation was delayed that and we are unsure about whether they will do the same in FY22, but are anticipating that they will. Consequently, we can only utilize \$1.9 million for FY22, so we'll use more funding from the Circuit Breaker Revolving Fund such that we'll have an anticipated balance of \$214,961 at the end of FY22. We always recommend having reserves of \$800,000 in that account to handle potential unanticipated demands – if we have an out-of-state move-in that requires out-of-district placement, that's a cost we're going to have to absorb. At present, we have 11 students on the watch list for out-of-district tuition. If some of those students don't go out-of-district at the beginning of the year, there is an opportunity to use some of those funds and take less out of the Circuit Breaker Revolving Fund. Unfortunately, kids on the watch list typically will go out-of-district. Thus, it's possible that we may have to go back to the town later in the school year to address the Circuit Breaker Revolving Fund.

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Year	Out-of- District Enrollment
FY17	81
FY18	78
FY19	66
FY20	65
FY21	62
FY22	62

Mr. Luff said that the 8.6% (160 students) are in our specialized programs. Those programs are specialized in terms of space, size, staffing, specialized instruction that's provided with therapeutic, mental health support, medical support, and behavioral support. Those programs are well-staffed and the instruction is very similar to an out-of-district program. A parent in another district may request out-of-district placement because in-district Special Education isn't meeting their needs. In our case, we can say we have specialized programs that meet their child's needs and they don't need to send that student out-of-district, so other communities want to send some students to us. There is a cost to do this – our analysis is that it costs roughly \$2 - \$3 million to run those specialized programs within Natick, much less expensive than out-of-district placement, and is best for the kids. This is why we're able to keep the out-of-district placements down. Ms. Miller added that some of the high school programs been able to receive kids from other districts that pay tuition (\$36,000 per student) to NPS and that helps meet our budget needs. These students are enrolled in our Compass Program (an emotional program), our North Star Program and our ACHIEVE program. That number declined last year, but we expect it to come back to pre-COVID levels in FY22. Mr. Luff added that they see this with their elementary and middle school programs as well. Smaller districts where they have an option to send a student to Natick vs. more expensive out-of-district programs that cost \$50,000 to \$60,000. These students from other districts can enroll in Natick only if NPS has the space and staffing to do so and it is not something that NPS is tied in to forever either (every year, these students are re-assessed and may continue in the district or return to their home district.

#### FY22 Projected SPED out-of-district Tuitions

FY 21 Budget (Pre-Circuit Breaker)	\$6,532,974
FY 22 Request (Pre-Circuit Breaker)	\$6,941,349
<u>Increase</u> from FY 21	+ \$408,375
Less: Circuit Breaker Offset	\$1,900,000
<b>Total Operating Tuition Request:</b>	<b><u>\$5,041,349</u></b>
Inclusive of:	
(11)Potential Outside Placements (watch list):	\$750,818
Projected Fee Increase	\$201,266
Occupational Education (6 Spots)	\$31,200

Mr. Luff said he typically provides the budget after Circuit Breaker funds are applied. Using the Circuit Breaker offset that we're proposing, the total operating tuition requests would be now \$5,041,349. Even though out-of-district tuitions went up, it's important to note that it includes the 11 watch list students that I referred to earlier. These are kids that are likely to go out-of-district and there have already been conversations about the need and some students may have already been placed out-of-district, some may have already gone out at this point. You know, but they're on that list for a reason. The \$750,818 includes a 3% projected fee increase since all out-of-district schools have an increase in fees every three years, so we project that at \$201,266 this year. This also

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includes occupational education, which are essentially our Norfolk Agricultural (Norfolk Aggie) students. These are not Special Ed students, but they are in the Student Services tuition line and we pay Norfolk Aggie \$31,200 for six students. If a parent decides they want their child to go to Norfolk Aggie or another agricultural school, we have to fund that.

## FY22 Operating Expenses Increase

FY21 Appropriation:	\$2,089,302	
FY22 Request:	\$5,694,133	
Increase of:		+ \$3,604,831
Due to:		
Increase in Actual Budget:	<b>+\$551,042</b>	
Reductions in other sources used to fund Special Education:		
No Prepay Savings Available:		
Funding only available in FY21 due to spring closure	\$1,903,831	
Reduction in Circuit Breaker Offset	\$1,149,958	
• Reduced Revenue		
• Over-utilized in previous years		

This slide represents the FY21 appropriation and the FY22 request. Our FY22 request is \$5,694,133, an increase of \$3,604,831. As I tell my staff, we're not increasing our budget \$3,604,831, but increasing it \$551,042. We're also reducing revenue sources that we have in-district to the difference between the FY21 appropriation and the FY22 request because we do not have the savings available from closure to fund the SPED tuition prepayment as we had last year (\$1,903,831). It also includes the Circuit Breaker offset reduction of \$1,149,958 due to reduced revenue as we discussed.

*Ms. Erin Miller presented on the impacts around COVID.*

COVID had a huge impact on our servicing and budgeting. Throughout the year, we've seen an increase in Special Ed referrals and eligibility. Parents are seeing their student struggle so we are working with these parents and seeing more Special Ed referrals, but we're also seeing eligibility for our students who are already on IEPs. We sometimes have students who come off IEPs through a reevaluation every three years, but due to COVID, it's difficult to assess whether or not those students need/do not need their IEP anymore, so the number of students coming off IEPs is lower, so our overall IEP numbers are up. NPS is looking to provide COVID compensatory services. From March 2020 to June 2020, DESE have asked us to provide compensatory services for lost services and special education services for our highest need students. We're in the process of programming for our kids during our February and April school vacation weeks as well as additional weeks in the summer. This will require us to pay our teachers, paraprofessionals and service providers to provide these additional services for our students during those times. We're proud that we brought every student on an IEP back to the district full-time this year – Natick is the only town in the state that's doing that. So our students on IEPs can access their services every day rather than every other week as their Gen Ed peers. We have staffed remote learning centers with regular and Special Ed staff to support our kids who are during their remote weeks to come in and get services and support on with their remote work. A big challenge has been at the elementary school. In a normal year, special educators and general educators have time during their day to have IEP meetings. However, this year, because of the elementary school schedule where students are working for the entire time that they're in live school, and teachers prep periods are when students go home, our Special Ed teachers and Gen Ed teachers who participate in meetings don't have a prep period so we're paying those teachers to participate in IEP meetings and that's an additional cost as well. Mr. Luff noted

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that, NPS is required to compensate teachers when they are unable to have their prep period within school hours. The teacher contract stipulates that each time a teacher misses their prep period for an IEP we have to pay them (\$35 for each meeting or missed prep period). There's also a question about getting evaluations done during the day. Mr. Luff said he analyzing those numbers to see what the total cost will be. This was also something was happening pre-closure as well, so it's no something new, it's just been exacerbated by COVID. Also, it's important to note that we have both general education and special education teacher at every IEP meeting to have full compliance; Finally, existing students on IEP s are showing new challenges specifically with mental health challenges and then new academic gaps. So, for students who had some math challenges in the past, we're seeing growth in that gap, so some students might need more services on their IEP than they previously had.

## SPED Staffing Requests

Position	FTE	Rationale
Kennedy Special Education Teacher	1.0	Support increase of student special education population and addition of 8th grade team at Kennedy (Requested in FY21)
Vocational Tutor	1.0	Provide job coaching and facilitate business opportunities at ACHIEVE Multimedia Center (copy center and/or NPS Swag Store)

Ms. Miller said the additional SPED teachers are required to support the increased number of students on IEPs at Kennedy. SPED teachers are part of the educational team along with the regular education teacher. The vocational tutor position is to oversee the Multimedia center (more detail later). This position is not considered a teaching position, but has more responsibility than what a paraprofessional would do, but it's not a Unit A teaching position for contract purposes.

## SPED Professional Development Programs

- PowerSchool Special Programs Training:
  - Special Programs is a PowerSchool module that Improves access and simplifies management of SPED data and documentation, case management, and communication with parents.
  - Student services staff received PowerSchool training but it has been very challenging in the COVID environment to transfer programming files from the previous system (eSPED) to PowerSchool and a lot of work has taken place during this transition
  - While Student Services staff participated in PowerSchool Special Programs training, but due to other instructional PD to address new learning models, refresher PD is required to ensure Student Services staff is properly trained and confident to write and share IEP's in PowerSchool
- IEP Process and Procedure
  - Working to continue to develop district-wide standards for consistency in IEP writing; accommodations, modifications, etc. and want to continue this momentum. Previously, different standards were used in different schools within NPS
  - Continued need in IEP writing in relation to goal writing and service delivery proposal is needed

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- IEP Eligibility and RTI Collaborative Processes — shared PD among Office of Teaching, Learning and Innovation (TLI) and Office of Student Services for increased collaboration between general education and special education teachers

## [ACHIEVE TRANSITION CENTER PROPOSAL](#)

### **ACHIEVE: Accessing Community Housing Integrated Education and Vocational Experience**

#### Summary of Proposal:

- Build upon program by creating community based business; Multimedia Center and/or Natick PS Swag Store
- Move ACHIEVE Program to new central location in downtown Natick at First Congregational Church
- Addition of \$147,000 in 2021-22 budget with increased potential of 2-3 students tuition-paying students into the program at a tuition cost of \$36,000 per student

The ACHIEVE program is for 18-22 year olds for post-high school students who are among the most challenging learners in the Natick system. They are students who may not have graduated from high school and require some post high school life skills, vocational skills, recreation, academic skills, and so on. Today, it's located at 90 Oak Street in the old East School. This project seeks to create a multimedia center that will include a Copy Center where our town partners and the public schools could send things like a budget book and similar items to have those jobs completed in the ACHIEVE Center. In addition to that, we also have envisioned it as a Natick swag store, a central location in Natick where folks could purchase Natick school gear. The Center could work with sports teams to create a log or stickers or magnets for their cars or T shirts. Our vision is to coordinate with Christina Maryland, our Communications Director. We've created some excellent logos in town and can build upon those logos and start making a business model out of those to provide to the greater community. The proposal includes moving our location from the East school to the First Congregational Church in downtown Natick and there are so many positives to that. First of all, being centrally located in town brings so many opportunities to the students. We want to build this business and help our students learn to work and engage with community. Today, the students are working in downtown coffee shops, at the Natick Service Council, in Town Hall, in the police Department, and at the Morse Library. From this downtown location, these kids now can just walk out the door and walk to these places they want to see – they have access to public transportation, the Town Common, local businesses, and restaurants.

The \$147,000 includes an industrial strength printer/copier and rentals for the First Congregational Church, and the vocational tutor. Ms. Miller noted that, before COVID, we were averaging about two students per year from other districts that paid tuitions to participate in the ACHIEVE program and noted that she had received three referrals. After COVID, we told parents that we couldn't take kids into the program because we weren't able to do the things we normally would and were unable to get those students this year. But I'm confident that, with what we already have in the ACHIEVE Program and the additional of this business model where students can learn key employment skills to bring out to other future jobs, we can get a couple kids from other local districts to come to our program. Mr. Luff noted that the achieve program has been well received by the community. It was originally located in two rental apartments in Cedar Gardens and we could teach them life skills and we moved to East school about six years ago. Students have always worked in the community held jobs, and learned to use the transportation system. Having a program and a business that they can run will give them some skills that we couldn't replicate elsewhere. This program enhancement will help students learn how to interview, develop a business model and implement that business

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model. We believe that the business opportunity exists for these students to be able to generate business with the support and patronage of the schools, the PTOs, Town Hall for the multitude of copying and multimedia projects that we are already are paying for and doing in our schools. This would be an incredible opportunity for the students to experience this. The Church has some extra space that we can look at in terms of possible moves for the preschool down the road as we're looking at our School space study team.

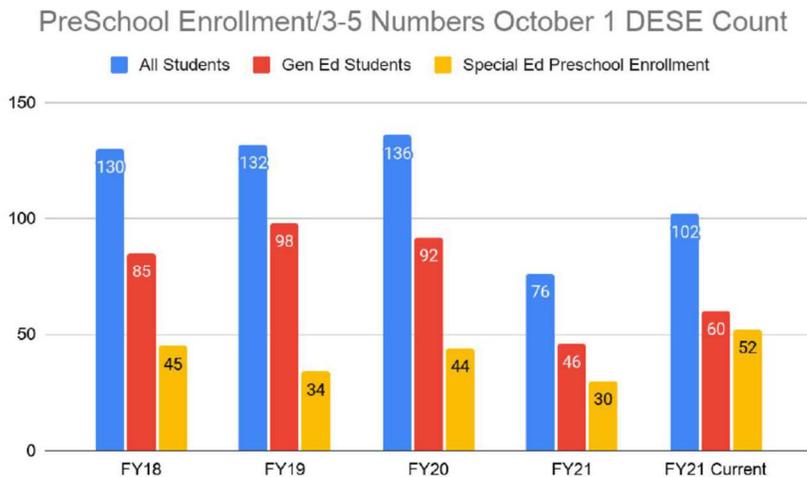
## Pre-School special education and instruction

Natick Public Schools supports its age 3-5 students with special education needs through an integrated preschool setting.

- As a reminder, NPS is required to educate 3-5 -year-old children in an integrated preschool setting with special education and regular education children in the same classroom, to the extent possible. Each year, upwards of 75 special education students receive required services alongside close to 100 of their non-disabled peers.
- Special education students receive services at no cost to the parent
- General education students slots are tuition-based to support the overall program

Locations	Classrooms
Lilja Elementary	2 Full Day Integrated Classrooms
Memorial Elementary	1 Full Day Integrated Classroom (added in FY21)
Natick High School	2 Full Day Integrated Classrooms ½ Day Integrated AM Classroom ½ Day Sub Separate PM Classroom (for students who are more significantly disabled) (3) ½ Day Integrated 3 Days per week (2) ½ Day Integrated 4 Days per week

## Pre-School Enrollment



Preschool Special Education enrollment #s increase throughout the year as students turn 3 years old

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There was a reduction in enrollment in FY21 that is COVID related. The blue bars show total student enrollment from FY18 onwards that is based on the October 1 count. The red bars are General Ed student and the yellow bars are Special Education students. You'll note that the red numbers are higher each year than the yellow numbers meaning more regular education vs. special education students. That is because, as the year goes on, and Special Education students turn three years old, these students become eligible for services in school. We try to go for a 51% general education/49% special education and that's usually what we achieve by the end of each year. In FY 18, there were 85 General Ed students and that number was probably the same at the end of the year. But that 45 number of special education students would be up closer to 84. In FY 21, the October 1 number of regular education students decreased to 46 children because parents were unwilling to commit to paying tuition for a full year given that school closure could occur again. That has been a significant issue in terms of trying to ensure we have a tuition-based spots to support the ongoing PreK classes. The FY21 current number is 102 total students with general education (60) and Special Ed (52) students, seeking already see the rising number of special education students that you typically see in a year as they reach three years old. This will have an impact on FY22 funding when we expect to be fully in-person again.

## FY22 Pre-School Operating Budget

ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	FY20 BUDGET	FY20 ACTUAL	FY21 BUDGET	FY22 REQUEST	FY 21 vs. FY 22 INC/ (DEC)
<b>NATICK PRE-SCHOOL BUDGET:</b>					
DUES & MEMBERSHIPS	\$530	\$372	\$450	\$0	-\$450
OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$300	\$270	\$350	\$2,600	\$2,250
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	\$2,400	\$1,354	\$1,860	\$4,500	\$2,640
TEXTBOOKS /SOFTWARE - CLASSROOM	\$750	\$728	\$440	\$0	-\$440
INSTRUC MATERIALS - SPED	\$3,500	\$2,872	\$1,300	\$1,925	\$625
GENERAL SUPPLIES - CLASSROOM	\$4,800	\$4,302	\$5,000	\$8,250	\$3,250
SPED INSTRUCIONAL SUPPLIES	\$2,100	\$812	\$2,100	\$1,300	-\$800
INSTRUC MATERIALS - AV	\$3,300	\$304	\$3,500	\$0	-\$3,500
<b>TOTAL NATICK PRE-SCHOOL</b>	<b>\$17,680</b>	<b>\$11,013</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$18,575</b>	<b>\$3,575</b>

The budget will increase by \$3,575 in FY22 and there were some adjustments made to be more reflective of each account funding source. Significant changes include:

- Professional Development: Tools of the Mind – Second round of a Train-the-Trainer session on Social Emotional/Executive Functioning for Preschoolers (+ \$2,640). The trained teacher then trains the rest of the staff on how to implement this very important for all of our preschool kids.
- Office supplies – Example: Laminator Film for Preschool. The Preschool was previously utilizing laminating supplies from the host building (Lilja, Memorial, and HS) and this is trying to more accurately reflect the usage within the preschool operating budget. (+\$2,250)
- General Classroom Supplies: New Classrooms, Increase in Enrollment (+ \$3,250)
- AV equipment- Addressed in Student Service Equipment Budget & shifts to technology (- \$3,500).
- Other reductions total (- \$1,690)

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FY19		FY20		FY21	
Preschool Tuitions #0119		Preschool Tuitions #0119		Preschool Tuitions #0119	
<b>REVENUE</b>		<b>REVENUE</b>		<b>REVENUE</b>	
Prior Yr Balance	(37,494.97)	Prior Yr Balance	30,436.46	Prior Yr Balance	103,340.40
Tuition	543,036.70	Tuition	518,745.89	Tuition	439,784.00
<i>Total Revenue</i>	505,541.73	<i>Total Revenue</i>	549,182.35	<i>Total Revenue</i>	543,124.40
<b>EXPENSES</b>		<b>EXPENSES</b>		<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Salary & Wages	475,105.27	Salary & Wages	445,841.95	Salary & Wages	500,000.00
Expense		Expense		Expense	
<i>Total Expenses</i>	475,105.27	<i>Total Expenses</i>	445,841.95	<i>Total Expenses</i>	500,000.00
<b>Final Balance</b>	30,436.46	<b>Final Balance</b>	103,340.40	<b>Projected Balance</b>	43,124.40

Pre-K enrollment is down significantly in FY21 since hybrid learning really is not conducive for 3 – 5 year-olds. As a result, DESE held us harmless for the reductions in Pre-K we are not penalized by reductions in per-pupil allotments for funding. The chart above is the revolving account or money received from our non-disabled peer’s tuition. In FY19, we started at -\$37,494 and that was the year that the School Committee increased the tuition fees because we were going into the red and needed to stop that. As a result, we received \$543,036 in tuition, and began the year with \$505,541 less expenses of \$475,000 to end the year with a balance of \$30,436. In FY20, there was a slight reduction in tuition that year (\$518K v. \$543K) because the kids weren't in school the last two months of FY20 and not receiving nearly as many services as they could and expenses were also reduced by \$30,000 due to closure, so the year-end balance was \$103,340. FY21 tuitions are only \$439,784 and we are paying more out in salaries and wages as we added one classroom. However, we expect to be able to in the year with the projected balance of \$43,124. If we are able to open next year without COVID restrictions, we anticipate \$637,754 if all of our slots are filled. Mr. Luff said they had their enrollment lottery two weeks ago and all of our FY22 tuition slots are filled; we’ve already received 83 deposits out of 93 available tuition slots so we're confident in that number and the revenue from those tuitions is \$10,600. The School Committee may increase fees by 2% this year. Although we have 12 kids on the waitlist, are not proposing an extra preschool classroom this year

### ELL Staffing Requests

Position	FTE	Cost	Justification
<b>English Language Learner (ELL) Teacher at Kennedy</b>	1.0	\$63,640	Enrollment
<b>ELL Department Head Stipend</b>	–	\$9,265	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher required for ELL State Requirements</li> <li>- DESE Coordinated Program Review in 2016 cited the District for not providing the adequate number of instructional hours for our Level 1 (Entering) and Level 2 ELL Students (Emerging – Beginning English)</li> <li>- 2.5 hours per day to a full day of direct instruction delivered by a licensed ESL teacher required</li> <li>- When the report was issued, 1 out of 30 students who qualify as level 1 or 2 were receiving required instructional hours</li> </ul>

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- Department Head Stipend is for supervisory responsibility and is required to address increased evaluation, coordination, and monitoring of ELL at the High School level

Dr. Nolin pointed out that this year's state accountability report for Natick, which does not include MCAS scores because these tests weren't done in FY21. It included a really strong emergent scenario was High School ELL completion of Mass Core requirements (the state expectation for what a rigorous high school education should look like). Not all students complete all the Mass Core requirements and we had a dramatic rise for ELL students achieving in that area (from 8 to 58 students). Even with an informal leader of ELL at the high school, we've seen positive returns so I'm excited about that because we're making progress in this area. Mr. Luff added that a teacher has been informally performing this role despite not being paid a stipend as she's not a department head. However, she has been doing the monitoring work and has earned the stipend. Dr. Nolin added that it has been mutually beneficial up to this point because she was training to receive an administrator license, but we can't prey on someone's social justice leanings as a means to fund our business model.

Our ELL enrollment dipped from 190 in FY20 to 158 in FY21 (based on October 1 enrollment) and I believe that number is accurate. We added the preschool screening requirement for all of our preschool students to determine whether they might require ELL services even though the state does not require us to deliver the services yet. However they want us to know who those students are. Also, once a student is identified as an ELL learner, we must monitor exiting students for four years following that designation. The sheltered English endorsement is designed to ensure that all content level teachers have the required strategies that they need in order to teach and work with ELL students. The English language Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) was restarted two years ago and gives parents and advocates a voice for services provided to ELL students in the district.

We made another staffing request for a Social Worker at the High School (0.4 FTE, \$22K) that would increase the current Social Worker from 0.6 FTE to 1.0 FTE. It was accidentally omitted from the original FY22 budget request. It is currently funded out of the COVID Relief fund and is needed to provide mental health services to our most at-risk general education students – homeless students or students in foster care.

The state added a new facet to McKinney-Vento law such that it adds foster-care students the same rights as homeless students to remain in their school of origin where they were previously and be transported to and from school. They may also enroll in the school district where they are temporarily residing. In FY 20, we had 48 McKinney-Vento students and 17 foster care students. A question came up of the school committee on whether Natick is eligible for a grant for McKinney Vento students. Natick is still not eligible for that grant funding today because it requires 50 McKinney-Vento students in your district to get the first level of grant funding and we currently have 48.

## Questions from the Subcommittee

In the post-COVID world, do you feel that the Student Services budget is adequate to address those emerging needs such as greater RTI, hiring math specialists, etc.?

Mr. Luff said Mr. Downing's presentation of teaching learning innovation covered RTI and that's where the math specialist conversation came up. There are some interventionists in the special services budget, guidance counselors and social workers. Right now, I feel confident that that we

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have what we need but we have to determine the impact of COVID closure and assess whether we might need something different for intervention purposes. Mr. Downing is collecting a significant amount of data on the impact for general education students and that data will modify our vision on what we need as we move forward. Dr. Nolin stated that, on the general education side, I do not feel that the funding is sufficient to withstand what has come to us with COVID, but we didn't expect it to do that because it isn't necessarily a fair thing to lay into the operating budget. But if you're asking me whether we have all the staff to accelerate the recovery that we need, the answer is no. We've requested the math specialists since 2012 and it's imperative that we get them now as the data on early math mastery is not gout-of-district for this year, although reading is looking gout-of-district. Also, as Natick's poverty level drops, so does its Title 1 intervention services and that's where English Language Arts and Math Intervention lies in the district. We're meeting very shortly with our Title 1 teachers to let them know that that Title 1 funding decreased and that will mean either layoffs or a re-fashioning of that program. We have KEIPS and FEIPS for literacy and need that similar scaffolding in math. NPS is very light on both math interventionists and ELL interventionists (one at each middle school) and hopefully we can stagger that hiring through a couple of budgets and hope to receive additional federal or state funding to help. Mr. Luff noted that without intervention the possibility of Special Education needs increases. Right, we have 933 students on IEPs, but that number could increase without these resources.

Mr. Evans said that the sub-total of \$1.2 million for out-of-district tuitions jumped out and requested clarification. Mr. Luff said the out-of-district tuition is \$408,375. The \$1.2 million is an aggregation due to the moving of revenue sources. The other issues are the revenue reductions based on the prepayment that's no longer available and the reduction in the Circuit Breaker offset that equals \$1,149,000. So, the \$551 K, \$1.9 million, and 1.14 million equal the total increase to the FY22 student services operating budget.

Mr. Evans asked for clarification on the budget for COVID compensatory services Mr. Luff noted that started a process of compensatory services. We agreed to take around \$217,000, there's actually \$274,000 minus some other things for COVID comp compensatory service out of Circuit Breaker. So the Circuit Breaker number used in the FY 22 budget has already been expended. Those compensatory services cost \$26,000/week and there will be two week-long sessions of compensatory services (one in April and the second in summer), so we'll have \$125,000 remaining for general compensatory services. For many of our other Special Ed kids, the first three weeks are for the high need program students where they could be receiving up to 12 days of service. Dr. Nolin said NPS is trying to provide those same types of vacation, weekend, and summer learning experiences for general ed students and we received a DESE grant to do that. However, they are having a hard time staffing it and parents are not sending their children because everyone is exhausted from the environment. However, we're hoping that the math weekend camps are going to catch on so we can address the deficits that I shared earlier. Ms. Miller added that the compensatory services for February school vacation week, we had some questions last night about whether it's the right time to offer it. Parents are incredibly excited about this opportunity – we've offered it to 75 students and have about 50 coming, and a few have responded that they were just going to take a break during this period.

Mr. Evans noted that, at the end of FY22, the Circuit Breaker balance will be \$214,000 based on your projections. What is the recovery plan to beef up that balance? Dr. Nolin said during NPS' mid-year meetings with the district leaders, Mr. Downing said we have the plans as assessed and the benchmark assessments of skill mastery as assessed thus far this year that gives us an indication of the skills lost and deficits due to COVID. He is putting that plan together. My suspicion is that the

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recovery will be staggered over a two year period and that includes not only content recovery but also skills acquisition, particularly in math and there are also some deficits in high school writing that need to be addressed that fell off the coverage roster in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade last year. That plan is going to be available within a month.

Mr. Luff said the first goal of circuit breaker was not to have an offset greater than the revenue received each year. For FY 22, we have \$1.9 million in offset and offset or and we're receiving back revenue of \$1,181,890. That's the first step, not overspending not over-allocating. During the year, there will be the ups and downs in tuitions as they are always volatile so there is a lot of fluidity and see where we land. If we're too low, that's we need to have a conversation with the School Committee and Town Administration about the need for additional funds. I'd like to see the T circuit breaker account group back up to \$800,000 over the course of multiple years.

Mr. Pope asked if we analyze the cost of reducing the out-of-district number for providing more in-district services. For example, if there are 15 students who would cost \$1 million for in-district education, but would cost \$2 million in out-of-district tuition. Mr. Luff noted that NPS added in-district specialized programs over the years to ensure that we have programs that are similar in service delivery options to the out-of-district programs. For example, we have multiple programs for kids with communication impairments, or cognitive impairments, autism programs program for kids with language disabilities, the emotional/behavioral program and integrated preschool program. The integrated Preschool is designed to ensure that we have and in district program and the post-secondary ACHIEVE program to educate those students as well. Mr. Luff said they regularly analyze where to build in district programs where a bulk of our kids might need to be out-of-district to help manage the costs. Spending \$2 million on in district programs enables us to not have to send 160 kids currently in those programs out-of-district which would cost approximately \$12 million.

Mr. Pope asked if NPS has looked at the marginal cost of the other 8.6% of out-of-district students to see whether future programming can be brought in-district. Mr. Luff said they continually look at the programs where we identify needs, although it was very difficult to do that this year. Through our monitoring, if we see multiple students who we either send out-of-district or see an emerging need, we see if it's feasible to develop an in-district to bring students back. Through that process, we can bring 3 to 5 kids back each year. However, since we were close, we couldn't do that and that has driven a slight increase in tuition costs in FY22.

Mr. DeLuca noted that Mr. Luff mentioned the Brandon school in a prior presentation and asked how the state has changed how it handles homeless students in foster care students. Mr. Luff said the Brandon School has multiple facets and dynamics to its program – they are residential school with a Special Education day program school. They are also the supplier of beds, residences to students through DCF (Department of Children and Families). In the past, depending on the situation, if kids were placed there, they would have fallen under McKinney-Vento. McKinney-Vento changed to you foster students the same rights as homeless students. If a student moves from a foster home and one town to another town, you're not going to have the educational wall blocks based on where you live or where you went. Because DCF places kids at Brandon School, they qualify as a foster placement now. So, we become responsible for in terms of educational requirements, transportation to and from where they were previously in school prior to attending Brandon School and they came from Worcester, they have a right to go to school in Worcester and we are obligated to transport them, OR they can choose to attend school in Natick. .

Mr. DeLuca asked RE the social worker change from 0.6 FTE to 1 FTE and the issues or concerns that this would address and cover and the difference between the role of a social worker and a guidance counselor. Mr. Luff said that guidance counselors focus on ensuring kids graduate and are ready for

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post-secondary advancement and career goals, but do not provide mental health services. There is a significant need at the high school right now for mental health services. The 0.4 addition is being funded through a grant to handle a significant increase in caseload. Ms. Miller added that the role of the social worker is to provide the continuity of care for those students who present with mental health challenges in school. Of course, those mental health challenges also happen at home and they have outside clinicians that they work with and the school collaborates with those outside clinicians to provide that continuity of care and this requires a great deal of work outside of the school day and on the weekends.

Mr. Scurlock asked for clarification on the sufficiency of compensatory services budget, noting that NPS needs to do the necessary catch-up in the coming year. Mr. Scurlock asked whether any parents had asked for their student to stay back a year because of the educational loss this year. Dr. Nolin said she has only had one parent request that their student repeat their current grade – it was more that the parent was frustrated with the COVID learning environment and online learning and, in his assessment, his child just didn't seem to be progressing. That precipitated us connecting him with someone at the Middle School, they reviewed their performance data so that the father could get an understanding of which parts the student had mastered and which parts hadn't been mastered, to help him decide not to throw away the whole grade. The first semester of high school just concluded in December and we are almost at the halfway mark of Middle School, and are completing the first benchmarking for the elementary schools. Dr. Nolin anticipates being in position to assess the project of individual students. It is not a current day practice in any school system to hold students back as they did in prior years when we went to school. The research clearly shows that it doesn't help and actually has a negative impact on their social emotional development and their well-being. And students who are racial and linguistic minorities and financial hardship students are disproportionately held back because they don't have the parent advocacy. RTI then steps in to be the advocate and equalizer for all. We will very likely be coming to the Finance Committee for the reserve funds to address compensatory needs. We're also working with Rep. Linsky to understand what might be available from the state and to see whether DESE will provide new monies in place to help. Last year, when we set the budget, NPS promised to come back to the Finance Committee as soon as we needed to withdraw from the Article 19 funds or the Finance Committee - Reserve Fund. Mr. Luff added that he is confident that the money we have for COVID compensatory services that we're using at a Circuit Breaker to fund services for kids. It's a robust program and, at present, we can address this, but will have to monitor it carefully to see how the need develops. Dr. Nolin said that withdrawing that \$275,000 out of Circuit Breaker makes me nervous around potential move-ins and potential surprises in Special Ed and the flexibility to address that need.

Mr. Scurlock asked whether regular education preschool is fully funded and where it comes from out of the budget. Mr. Luff said the general education preschool program is self-sufficient after we reduce the required costs for special education students. The \$1,571,528 cost to the budget is required to support the special education students who have to be educated at no cost to the parents. This equates to approximately \$20,000 per special education student. The general education programming, with supporting tuition from the non-disabled students (\$637,754), is self-sufficient on its own, and helps us reduce overall special education costs.

Mr. Scurlock noted that in FY21, tuitions decreased by \$78,961 due to decreased preschool student enrollment, but salaries were higher and requested clarification. Mr. Luff noted that, in the preschool tuition revolving account, tuitions decreased to \$439,000 and salaries are higher at \$500,000 because we added a preschool class at Memorial School.

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## Questions from the Public

Ms. Emily Grant asked how often do kids who are on the watch list for out-of-district tuitions actually are placed out-of-district. Mr. Luff said there are 11 students on the watch list and noted that when we develop the watch list, it's likely that 95% of them go out-of-district at some point, either in the current fiscal year or the next fiscal year.

Ms. Grant asked what happens to the out-of-district tuition funds if they aren't used in that fiscal year. Mr. Luff said they remain in the tuition account and noted that watch lists are interesting in that we always catch the students that may end up needing out-of-district placement because those students may develop significant issues at some point in the year and put on the watch list; others may be taken off the watch list. out-of-district fluctuates incredibly year to year, depending on how the year unfolds and move-ins that we did not know about. Mr. Luff noted that they regularly assess where they are with out-of-district tuitions by monitoring the watch list numbers and the allocated out-of-district tuitions. If, for example, a child requiring \$300,000 out-of-district tuition moved in from another state, we check whether we can accommodate this in our budget through the revolving fund before requesting more funding from the town.

Ms. Grant commented that, at first glance, this looks like a huge increase in the budget, and you clearly explained the reason and that it's not a huge in your Student Services budget and asked for a summary of Circuit Breaker history. Mr. Luff stated that up until two years ago, we put the at least the amount that we were getting in revenue into the circuit breaker account. Over the past few years, we were averaging \$2.1 million to \$2.5 million and utilizing the amount of circuit breaker offset that we were receiving in revenue. In many cases, we would receive more revenue unexpectedly each year so that build up the circuit breaker revolving fund over the years and we are very conservative with it. That's what allowed us to work with the town to use some of that revolving fund to solve an overall district budget deficit in FY21. We did that knowing that, at some point, we'd have to come back down to where the revenue was were probably looking at an override down the road. Dr. Nolin added that in discussions with our town partners on financial planning, the expectation was that NPS would use the revolving funds in this manner in anticipation of the operational override. It is our belief that we could not in gout-of-district conscience go to the town requesting more funding if haven't expended everything that we could to balance our budget. This was done prior to COVID and it was the right move to make at the time. Mr. Scurlock confirmed that the Finance Committee requested that the revolving accounts be brought down as far as possible so every step was taken to utilize all the money that was there.

Ms. Catherine Brunell asked whether individual schools budgets are working proactively to increase efficiency for the FY22 budget. Dr. Nolin said NPS strives not to have a significant turn-back in schools and asked principals to be conservative. Some of that is due to schools using a different amount of resources because 300 students are in Remote Learning Academy. Dr. Gray did his quarterly spend-down report last night at the school committee meeting and we're on track to spend the budget as we expected. If there are unused funds and there are no spending overages in other areas, we would report to the School Committee how we might use those funds to address overruns. And this year, there are overruns everywhere – we're hoping not to have to use the Finance Committee Reserve funds but it remains to be seen whether we will not.

Ms. Brunell asked if the Financial Planning Committee (FPC) has discussed the school budget. Dr. Nolin said the FPC has not met this year and the School Committee is discussing the budget with Town Administration. We're in discussion with our town partners to work out the budget.

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Ms. Brunell noted that the Chapter 70 reimbursement was flat and asked what the reason was for the change in reimbursement right for Circuit Breaker funds. Mr. Luff answered that Circuit Breaker is a very different type of a funding process than Chapter 70 allocations. Circuit breaker reimbursement is the total of all out-of-district tuitions that we that we paid in the prior year. The Legislature decides percentage of that cost gets reimbursed to towns. Based on previous years, we anticipated it to be 75% and ended up being 70%. We also anticipated through the new ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) process that we receive additional reimbursement for transportation. They delayed that reimbursement so we're not going to receive this additional reimbursement for FY 22. Dr. Nolin added that \$243,000 in Student Opportunities Act money that we thought was available turned out not to be available. Dr. Gray said that Chapter 70 has increased slightly for FY22. The state typically adds a per-pupil cost. Since we're being held harmless on our enrollment figures due to COVID (lower enrollment in FY21), we will get that slight increase.

Ms. Brunell asked why NPS chose to open up a preschool class at Memorial if we had a reduction in students. Mr. Luff noted that the numbers supported opening a class at Memorial and there a significant number of tuition-paying and Special Ed students at Memorial. Other classrooms in the district are lower because of COVID-related issues and because some parents decided they did not want to send their kids to preschool after we said that we would possibly be closing this year at certain points in time. Without the Memorial program, we'd have even less tuition coming in and less ability to provide services to some of the special ed kids that are there. Dr. Nolin added that NPS didn't fund the second preschool classroom that was proposed for FY21.

Ms. Grant asked

Ms. Grant asked how many students are in the ACHIEVE program service and what the FY21 budget is relative to the FY 22 budget. Mr. Luff said that there are eight students in that program. The FY21 operating budget is \$11,000 but doesn't exclude the personnel and job coaches.

Ms. Grant asked how much of the proposed ACHIEVE Program is one-time cost versus ongoing cost. Mr. Luff said \$35,000 of that is for the multimedia machine. Ongoing costs would be the rental at the First Congregational Church (\$97,000 per year) and \$6000 for supplies, the personnel and job coaches. Dr. Nolin added that the School Space committee is evaluating whether it might move the preschool classes presently at the high school to that Church space.

## Meeting Minutes

### January 14, 2021 minutes

Mr. Scurlock moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Pope, voted 4-0-0.

Mr. DeLuca = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

### February 2, 2021 minutes

Mr. Scurlock moved to approve, seconded by Mr. DeLuca, voted 4-0-0

Mr. DeLuca = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

*Mr. Evans moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. DeLuca, voted 4-0-0.*

Mr. DeLuca = yes

# FINAL

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Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

Meeting Adjourned 6:28 PM