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BPS Proposes New School Funding Model for FY12

Weighted Student Funding will target individual student needs, not programs or facilities

The FY12 preliminary budget Superintendent Johnson introduced at the February 2 School Committee meeting incorporated a new Weighted Student Funding (WSF) model to allocate funds to 118 schools in the BPS. Under WSF, dollars follow the students and individual schools receive funds according to the specific needs of their student population and total number of students. WSF dovetails closely with budget changes involving the net closing (8) and merging (4) of 12 schools, efforts to increase class sizes within contact maximums and a realignment of services for students with disabilities. Total spending for schools is redistributed but not reduced under WSF.

Without WSF, the projected FY12 budget gap of \$63M would have resulted in a 7.4% cut for all schools even though they have faced three consecutive years of across-the-board cuts and per-pupil funding reductions. A total 90 schools, representing 80% of students (45,260), will benefit as a result of WSF by receiving more resources than a 7.4% cut, while 28 schools will receive a greater than 7.4% reduction. Approximately 62 or 52% of Boston's schools will have an FY12 budget increase under WSF.

Previously, school budgets were set according to student enrollment and programs offered at the school so the same amount could be spent on staff regardless of the number of students in a classroom. WSF creates incentives for schools to plan for larger class sizes and serve students with higher social and disability needs. WSF establishes school budgets on a per-pupil basis weighted by grade and by such factors as poverty status and

the need for English language, special education and vocational instruction. The weights are based on staffing costs according to average class sizes greater than the current averages but below the contract maximums. Each school receives a \$200,000 school foundation allocation to cover the cost of a principal, administrative assistant and additional discretionary expenses. Pilot schools and schools with past program exceptions will be affected by WSF. [Click here](#) for a calculation of the FY12 [Adams School](#) budget under WSF.

Steps have been taken to work with 21 schools facing large cuts to provide a softer transition to WSF over two years. Added costs to provide the soft landing totaled \$12.7M of which \$6.1M will have to be offset by additional budget cuts in central and other non-school areas. Schools affected generally are small high schools that face a cut greater than 15%, Turnaround Schools that face a cut greater than 15% and schools that will have an increase in enrollment and a decrease in funding.

The three district schools that focus on special education will be held harmless in FY12 while WSF is refined to better reflect funding needs at those schools. Early Learning Centers and Early Education Centers will also be held harmless.

New York, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Philadelphia are examples of other cities that have successfully implemented a WSF model. The impact of WSF on schools and programs will be discussed throughout March during the four FY12 BPS budget hearings. [Click here](#) to see the adjusted FY12 allocation for each school.