



PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02186

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Dear Milton Public Schools Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and Staff:

The Milton Public Schools may face a major budget crisis in the 2009-2010 school year. This memo summarizes the recommendations of the system's leadership team if that budget crisis becomes a reality.

Briefly stated, we will be facing a substantial reconfiguring of the system to cope with our limited resources. Drastic cuts will be imposed across the district: at the high school, middle school, and elementary school levels. Educational quality on all three levels will suffer.

First, some background:

The base appropriation for this academic year (FY08-09) is \$31,779,140. To keep **level services** for next year—that is, retaining the level of programming at which the schools currently operate—would require an increase of \$2.0 million due to salary increases and other contractual obligations, as well as increased costs in other areas. To simply roll over this year's budget into next year, which would address expected decreases in revenue from state and federal sources, would require an increased appropriation of \$1.8 million.

Another possible scenario would be **level funding**, which would necessitate \$1.8 million in reductions to the school department.

Finally, in the absence of a successful override, a **non-contingent budget** would result in approximately \$2.35 million (\$550,000 below level funding) in reductions. This last option (-\$2.35 million) would mean deep cuts to the school system, which would severely impact every student at every grade level and in every discipline in the Milton Public Schools.

The Milton Warrant Committee has recommended an increased appropriation to the school department of \$1.3 million, contingent upon the passage of a Proposition 2 ½ override by Milton's voters. (The override referendum has been approved by the Board of Selectmen, and is scheduled for Monday, June 8.) If the override passes, the school department will still experience some staff reductions, but the damage to our educational system will be far less severe.

Meanwhile, we owe it to our students, families, and staff members—as well as to the residents of Milton—to develop the best plans to address our budget situation. All interested parties are encouraged to attend an Open Budget Hearing on Thursday, April 30th at 7:30 p.m. in the Milton High School Auditorium to discuss these proposals.

The following information evolved out of the Milton School Committee meeting which took place on Thursday, April 23, 2009. That meeting was called in response to a letter from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, which strongly discouraged us from closing one of Milton's elementary schools. (That school-closure scenario had been considered as a way of saving classroom teaching positions by sacrificing administrative and support positions.) In their letter, SBA indicated that they might require Milton to reimburse the state money used to rebuild the closed school: many millions of dollars. This decision by the SBA effectively eliminated school closure as an option, and we needed to find alternate ways to close the projected budget gap in a non-contingent budget scenario.

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Simply stated, a non-contingent budget scenario requires the district-wide loss of up to 46 staff members, including more than 38 teachers. As a result, class sizes would increase across all grades and at every level, course offerings would be cut back, and the four elementary school populations would have to be reconfigured.

We have explored several options to achieve staff reductions on this dramatic scale, while causing the least possible harm to the educational experience in Milton. In the following pages, we first present our recommendations for cuts at Milton High School and the Pierce Middle School. We then present two elementary-level options for consideration by the Milton School Committee—and by extension, by the school community and the Town.

To restate the obvious: As educators, we *strongly recommend against the adoption of any of these cuts*. But our job is to identify the least damaging way—from an educational standpoint—to live within a non-contingent budget. That is what follows.

Milton High School

The non-contingent budget would require the reduction of 12.4 full time employees (FTEs) at the high school. These cuts come on the heels of significant reductions over the past 2 budget years. Next year's cuts would most likely have to include:

- Elimination of a teacher from science, English, PE/Health, art, history, mathematics, world language, music, family/consumer studies and music departments.
- Cuts to support staff, library, business courses and the guidance department.
- Increased class sizes and the loss of electives, which would put more than 400 students into study halls. According to MHS principal Dr. John Drottar, “the nature of Milton High School will be totally different.” In addition, the implementation of study halls could result in students not receiving the minimum hours of instruction required by the state.
- Class sizes at 25-30 for electives; supplemented by study halls.
- Class sizes at 25-35 for core subjects (required courses).
- Decrease in high school graduation requirements.
- Reduction in Advanced Placement, elimination of World Language classes, elimination of Humanities, elimination of lab activities in the Science classes and the elimination of the Interactive Math Program.
- Substantial increase in user fees for participation in athletics, clubs, and activities.
- **Most important, cuts of this nature would require the reporting of a “substantive change” to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), which is the organization that accredits New England high schools. These changes would jeopardize Milton High’s status as an accredited high school. Because the rules of accreditation require each high school principal to report substantive changes, that notification would certainly happen, and our high school most likely would be put back on academic probation.**

Pierce Middle School

The non-contingent budget would require the reduction of 11.5 full time employees (FTEs) at the middle school. These cuts would certainly have a negative impact on the school’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) required by the state. Because some subgroups at Pierce have failed to make AYP in past years, the middle school is in “Corrective Action” in English Language Arts and “Restructuring” in Math.

Additional impacts:

- Elimination of 6 team teachers (Math, English, Science, Geography/History).

- Elimination of 2 World Language teachers, 1 art teacher, 1 computer teacher, 1 librarian and .5 Physical Education teacher.
- Elimination of leveling for English Language Arts and possibly math.
- Elimination of the entire Latin program (in which more than 80 students currently participate).
- World Language reduced to every other day in Grade 6 for all students
- Elimination of writing program in Grade 6
- Class sizes at 25-30 for electives; supplemented by study halls
- Class sizes at 24-30 for core subjects (English/Mathematics/Science/Social Studies/World Language).
- Reduction of common planning time, curriculum meetings, parent meetings, peer observation, etc.
- No Physical Education classes for some students.
- Implementation of study halls, which are discouraged by the state’s Department of Education.
- No ACE (honors art)
- Library closed during the day
- **Perhaps most discouraging, these cuts would mean the virtual dismantling of the “Team Model,” which is at the core of the Pierce Middle School experience. Teams of four teachers in different subject areas take responsibility for teams of students, and thereby give those students consistent, personalized, rigorous instruction. Our new middle school was built around this concept, which across the nation has proven the most educationally effective (and safe) way to educate children at an extremely vulnerable age.**

Elementary Schools

Again, the state’s decision to discourage the closure of one elementary school has a profound impact on the budget. In order to comply with the state’s decision, address the budgetary issue, and minimize loss of teachers, it becomes necessary to restructure Milton’s elementary schools or programs. The leadership team considered eight options to address this challenge. Of the eight, two were chosen as “final options” and they are detailed below. The non-contingent budget would require the reduction of 11 full time employees (classroom teachers and specialists) at the elementary school level.

Two Final Options

After extensive consideration of all options, the leadership team narrowed the options to the following two choices:

French Immersion Continuum Strands (District-wide)

As students enter the French Immersion program in Grade One, they would be assigned to a school. The student, along with their classmates, would remain in this school for the rest of their elementary years. Each elementary school would “host” an entering Grade One class each year and keep those students for five years.

Five-Year View of French Immersion Program:

	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade</u>
Glover	5	1	2	3	4
Tucker	1	2	3	4	5
Collicot	2	3	4	5	1
Collicot	3	4	5	1	2
Cunningham	4	5	1	2	3
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14

- After a student is assigned they stay in the same school for their Grade One to Five elementary experience.
- Families may have children in more than one school if they chose French Immersion.
- English Program will continue to be served by the four home schools.
- Year-to-year flexibility for class size issues in French Immersion.
- Teachers may need to change grade levels or schools from year to year. The option for teachers to ‘loop’ from one grade to the next within a school remains open.
- Possible loss of Grade Four (4) integration opportunities (French and English programming).
- No moving costs anticipated.
- Transportation cost to be explored.
- Kindergarten students will attend their neighborhood school
- No instructional aides for large class sizes

Class size and FTE savings:

<u>School Year 09/10</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Total Students</u>	<u>Class Size</u>	<u>FTE</u>
Glover	5	96	32, 32, 32	9.0 FTE Reduction
Tucker	1	198	33, 33, 33, 33, 33, 33,	
Collicot	2	151	30, 30, 30, 30, 31	
Collicot	3	127	31, 32, 32, 32	
Cunningham	4	138	27, 27, 28, 28, 28	

French Immersion Partner Strands

A partnership would be established between Collicot and Cunningham and another between Glover and Tucker. Students would be grouped by grade. All Grade 3 French Immersion students from both Glover and Tucker schools, for example, would attend classes at Tucker. All Grade 5 students from Cunningham and Collicot would attend classes at Cunningham.

View of French Immersion Program

		Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Collicot	Projected		26 / 24 / 25 = 75		20 / 18 / 20 / 20 = 78	
	Partner		30 / 30 / 30 = 90 (+15 Tucker)		26 / 26 / 26 = 78	
Cunningham	Projected	63 / 41 = 104		22 / 23 / 22 = 67		21 / 21 = 42
	Partner	34 / 35 / 35 = 104		33 / 34 = 67		21 / 21 = 42
Glover	Projected		25 / 26 = 51		22 / 19 / 19 = 60	
	Partner		30 / 31 = 61 (+10 Tucker)		30 / 30	
Tucker	Projected	69 / 25 = 94		22 / 22 / 16 = 60		18 / 19 / 17 = 54
	Partner	31 / 32 / 31 = 94		30 / 30 = 60		27 / 27 = 54

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School Year 09/10	Grade	Total Students		Class Size	FTE
Tucker	1	94		31,31,32	8.0 FTE Reduction
Glover	2	61		30, 31	
Tucker	3	60		30, 30	
Glover	4	60		30, 30	
Tucker	5	54		27, 27	
Cunningham	1	104		35, 35, 34	
Collicot	2	90		30, 30, 30	
Cunningham	3	67		33, 34	
Collicot	4	78		26, 26, 26	
Cunningham	5	42		21,21	

- After a student is assigned they stay in the same school for their Grade One to Five elementary experience.
- Some re-assignment issues (outside partner schools) at implementation.
- Families may have children in more than one elementary school if they chose French Immersion.
- English Program will continue to be served by the four home schools.
- Teachers may “loop” to stay with a class for two years, but teachers will need to move from school to school from one year to the next.
- No moving costs anticipated.
- Transportation cost to be explored.
- Kindergarten students will attend their neighborhood school
- No instructional aides for large class size

The reductions listed above and further staff reductions system-wide will have to be made if the Milton Public Schools face this major budget crisis in the 2009-2010 school year. I encourage you to stay informed by going to the Milton Public School web site at www.miltonps.org and by following our School Committee Meetings. The Milton Public Schools need your support and involvement in order to continue to provide a quality education for each of our Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 students. The time is now to get informed and involved in regards to the school budget process. Again, the Milton School Committee is hosting an Open Budget Forum for all interested members of the community on Thursday, April 30th at 7:30pm in the Milton High School Auditorium.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Gormley
Superintendent of Schools