

## **BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT: BUDGET 2017-18**

### **TALKING POINTS**

- **Bridgeport is the lowest on the economic scale among all school districts in Connecticut.** A district of over 21,000 students currently, the second largest in Connecticut, Bridgeport has added almost 700 in student enrollment over the last six years; and within the total, there has been corresponding growth in special education students and English language learners, our neediest students. Special education students constitute approximately 17% of the enrollment; and English language learners, 15% of enrollment.
- **As to our education budget, it is an established fact that Bridgeport is grossly underfunded, in comparison to its peer districts.** Compare Bridgeport's NCEP of \$14,343 (as of January 2017) to Hartford, at \$19,313; to New Haven, at \$18,248; to Waterbury, at \$15,219; and to Stamford, at \$18,063. Bridgeport is underfunded by \$21M for each \$1,000 in NCEP it does not receive. If Bridgeport were equitably funded with Hartford, as an example, Bridgeport's budget would rise by \$104M!
- **In Bridgeport, the City's percentage contribution to the total education budget is only 26%, while the State contributes the balance, 74%.** Evidently, with the State contribution at this high percentage, **Bridgeport relies substantially on State funding.**
- **In the 2016-17 school year, Bridgeport confronted a negative funding status** due to a reduced operating budget **and** reductions in grant revenue. Specifically, City funding remained virtually flat, while the State ECS/Alliance appropriation was lowered by -\$1,161,334 in total, \$911,334 at the start and \$250,000 midyear; and the cuts in various State grants, such as the Priority grant, Magnet and Aquaculture, amounted to an additional loss of -\$1.3M. On top of negative funding, the district had to manage escalated costs, such as collective bargaining, health insurance and special education. **These two factors led to a plan to close a Budget Gap of \$16M.**
- **What actions did the district take to close the Budget Gap in 2016-17?** Among the services eliminated were: Kindergarten paraprofessionals, Home-School Coordinators, guidance counselors at the elementary level,

mathematics coaches and university interns. Clearly, the loss of these services has an adverse impact on the capacity of schools to meet the needs of our students, particularly for intervention geared toward academic and socio-emotional growth.

- **What was the 2017-18 plan?** In planning for 2017-18, the Bridgeport BOE decided to seek a total increase in the operating budget of \$15M, comprised of \$11.4M labeled as non-discretionary and 3.6M as discretionary.
  - In regard to the request for an additional appropriation of **\$11.4M to fulfill non-discretionary purposes**, this amount was composed of \$9M plus \$2.4M intended to restore paraprofessionals in kindergarten classes, one per two classes. It is generally accepted among educators that assistance in the kindergarten classroom has a powerful effect in strengthening the foundation of a child's development.
  - In addition to \$11.4M, the district requested a supplement of at least **\$3.6M** to provide services we regard as essential. With discretionary funds, if allocated, we would expand intervention services in the early grades and in grades 9/10 in the high schools, as well as pursue curriculum and technology renewal at a more rapid pace in alignment with advances.
- **What is the status of the 2017-18 budget?** **As of September 21, 2017, the State has not yet passed a budget and the various versions published, in the July-September period, have created an atmosphere of extreme uncertainty and deep concern.** In early July 2017, when it was clear that passage of a budget was not forthcoming, the district took responsive action in anticipation of the strong probability of State ECS remaining flat. The first step was to institute a hiring freeze on July 21<sup>st</sup> for teacher vacancies in certification areas matching those of positions designated for potential elimination.
- **What was the 2017-18 net deficit condition?** The net deficit condition in the 2017-18 operating budget was \$8M, after taking into account the following factors:
  - First, the original amount of \$11.4M was adjusted downward to \$9M, by removing \$2.4M for restoration of kindergarten paras.

- As a result of an agreement with the City on a MOU pertaining to the federal grant for School Resource Officers, the city released access to the funds set aside for crossing guards in the operating budget, \$876,898. The City has agreed to fund all expenses related to crossing guards in the City budget, ending in perpetuity the practice of charging the BOE for the payroll expenses of the crossing guards.
- In the City's adopted budget, the City added \$387,593 to the City Share of the 2017-18 education budget.
- Adjustments were made for the Lighthouse Program's contribution to custodial supplies/services, from \$500,000 to \$75,000.
- The net result of the above-noted transactions was a shortfall of **approximately \$8M.**
- **What is the district's approach to resolve the FY18 budget gap of \$8M? In order to resolve the FY18 budget gap of \$8M, the district undertook a systematic, progressive approach to budget reduction in summer 2017.**
  - **Interim Budget Strategy #1**, implemented on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, encompassed the following reductions amounting to **approximately \$3M:**
    - **Literacy Coaches:** From 28 to 15 = -13.
    - **Career/Craftsmanship Program:** Elimination of the program [- 1 administrator, -4 teachers, - 1 clerical].
    - **Nurses:** -3 vacant positions
    - **Attendance Intervention Liaisons:** From 5 positions to 1 = -4
    - **Parent Center:** From 4 positions to 1 = -3
    - **District Office:** minus one vacant clerical position, freeze on two vacant custodial positions.
    - **Substitute Teachers in September:** restricted to long-term absence and professional development in school-specific grants and restorative practice only.
  - **Interim Budget Strategy #2**, implemented on August 17th, encompassed the following reductions amounting to **approximately \$1.4M:**
    - **Curriculum Renewal:** \$500,000 diverted to deficit prevention.

- **Family Resource Center (FRC) Coordinators:** -4 positions, previously funded in Title I as a supplement to the State FRC grants.
    - A State communication in July advised districts not to commit funds to the FRCs, in view of the uncertainty of continued State funding for FRCs.
  - **Security Guard:** -1 position, when a vacancy occurs.
  - **School Operating Allocations:** From \$25/student to \$20/student = -\$5 per student.
  - **Custodial/Security Fees for Extended Day Parent Involvement Events – Funded by the District through Title I:** Restricted to a maximum of two (2) events per school per month.
- **The net balance in the deficit, following completion of Strategy #1 and #2, was approximately \$3.5M.**
- **The district entered the 2017-18 school year, carrying a potential shortfall of \$3.5M, pending release of the State budget.**
- **What is the impact of Federal Grants – Title I/IIA/III? On Friday, September 8, 2017, the district received negative news, pertaining to significant federal grants, that exacerbated the fiscal condition.**
  - In 2017-18, the Title IIA grant has been reduced by 45%, a loss of (\$829,803). Additionally, the district's Title I allocation is reduced by (\$573,775) and Title III (Bilingual/ESL Education), by (\$25,148). The total loss equals approximately \$1.4M. With the inclusion of adjustments related to carryover funds, the adjusted shortfall to be addressed is in Title I/IIA, **\$1M**. A plan to reduce staff and services in the Title I/IIA grants will be implemented.
  - **It is important to recognize that the Title IIA grant, which has generated approximately \$1.8M per year to Bridgeport in support of staff recruitment and professional development activities, is slated for total elimination in 2018-19.** The 45% reduction in 2017-18 is the prelude to total elimination in the subsequent year.
  - **The combined shortfall, in the operating budget and federal grants, as noted, is approximately \$4.5M.**
- **What is the status as of September 22, 2017? In summary, as of September 22, 2017, the district continues to confront a projected 2017-18 operating budget deficit, in view of the delay in passage of a final State**

budget and the expectation of flat funding in ECS. *The projected deficit is \$3.5M in the operating budget alone and could grow, dependent upon the final allocations in State grants and ECS.* In response, the district remains in Deficit Prevention mode and is developing a Budget Gap Plan.

- **What is meant by Deficit Prevention Mode? Deficit Prevention Mode, which is to be complemented by a specific FY18 Budget Gap Plan, is encapsulated by the following major actions:**
  - **Hiring Freeze:** District Office and administrative support positions
  - **Stringent application of controls and cost management practices, applicable to procurement.**
    - Orders are processed for services/supplies that are mandated or essential only.
  - **Rigorous enforcement of restrictions and cost-effective practices, applicable to personnel services. Examples are...**
    - Effective December 1, 2017, the district will shift from New Teacher Hires to Source4 Subs only, in order to fill teacher vacancies that occur. The only exception will be in shortage areas, if a qualified, certified teacher is identified to fill a vacancy in a shortage area.
    - Overtime is strictly managed and controlled, in order to prevent any unnecessary expenditures.
- **Conclusion:** In the pendency of a 2017-18 State budget and the projection of continuing insufficiency of allocated resources to the Bridgeport School District, it is evident that the sequential budget reductions, imposed on Bridgeport over the course of two years, are the cause of severe limitations on both educational services and opportunities available to our students. Furthermore, these reductions have compounded the under-resourced condition that already existed, due to many successive years of inadequate funding in our urban school district. The current situation is most grave, as Bridgeport has reached the point at which the educational program, that can be sustained within the expected funding levels, will be ***at or below the bare minimum***. For the Bridgeport educational community, reversal of the negative trend causing ongoing diminution of fiscal capacity is urgent. Evidently, there is elevated concern throughout the community, and the proper response should be a strong advocacy movement on behalf of Bridgeport's students.

## SUMMARY TABLES

Operating Budget		
Year	Revenue Change	Actual Budget Gap
2016-17	-1.1M	-\$16M
2017-18	TBD	-\$ 8M

Federal Grants				
Year	Title I	Title IIA	Title III	Total
2016-17	+ \$192,306	-\$18,213	+\$11,841	+\$185,934
2017-18	-\$640,332	-\$829,803	-\$25,148	-\$1,495,283

State Grants	2015-16	2016-17	Change	% Change	2017-18
Priority District	\$6,098,507	\$5,784,353	-\$314,154	-5.15%	TBD
Interdistrict Magnet [Discovery, FCW HS Campus]	\$8,381,745	\$8,070,132	-\$311,613	-3.72%	TBD
Aquaculture	\$1,513,664	\$1,276,070	-\$237,594	-15.70%	TBD
TOTAL	\$15,993,916	\$15,130,555	-\$863,361	-5.4%	TBD