

The Ottoson community appreciates and thanks the School Committee, Supt Bodie, and Assistant Supt. Chesson for supporting the important work of educating our Ottoson Middle School Students. In addition we would like to thank the Arlington Community for their continued support through the Arlington Education Foundation and the Ottoson Parent Advisory Council.

This academic year the 1,215 Ottoson students and faculty have benefited greatly from the additional staffing to address the needs created by enrollment growth. I highlight five key areas:

- Two additional 8<sup>th</sup> grade cluster teachers who have enabled us to maintain a smaller class size, which ensures that teachers can give individual feedback, differentiate curriculum, and build supportive classroom communities.
- An additional 0.6 Physical Education teacher which has lowered class size, ensured locker room safety and met required planning time for PE staff.
- The 0.2 Family and Consumer Science Teacher helped balanced the course sections with other exploratory departments.
- The needed additional full time nurse has helped meet the needs of daily visits from over 60-90 students.
- The additional needed class sections due to increased enrollment in exploratory classes have helped students be more successful learners.

This year's budget requests are framed with input from Ottoson teachers, administrators, leadership team, and department chairs. Our key levers are quality teaching, academic rigor and individualized student learning. As a transitional leader, this year the work has centered on looking at supportive culture norms, structures, models and systems in place for the teaching and learning at Ottoson. We are fortunate to have at Ottoson talented teachers who have strived to do an outstanding job in a school that is at maximum student capacity with space limitations.

- Quality Teaching means investing in and developing educators to provide students with powerful teaching and learning, along with support staff that prepares them for college, career, and citizenship.
- Academic Rigor is achieved by implementing consistent, standards-aligned with curriculum supported by high quality instructional resources.
- Individualized/Personalized Student Learning means ensuring that each student receives targeted, data-informed instruction, with appropriate social and emotional supports.

We do realize this is a challenging budget year, and we are mindful of looking at our resources in a different way but wish to frame minimal needs for the 2017-2018 academic year for the Ottoson learners.

As you know this is a very special, very critical period of a student's life, and our students endure more changes that they will for the rest of their lives. They are changing

physically, sexually, mentally, and socially emotionally in every possible way. Their minds change from childlike to adult, not so much in what they think but in how they think. There are more important changes taking place at this age than at any other time except the very first year of life. This gives us a unique opportunity to support them with this development.

With these unique needs in mind the highest budget priority for Ottoson is aligned to the system goal of Social, Emotional Learning. We are requesting a 1.5 Adjustment Counselor /Social Worker. This increase will help to support the needs of students in regular education, special ed, ELL learners and students on 504's. With both the adjustment counselor (known as guidance) and the social worker we are looking at developing a structure that helps our students who are increasingly affected by many social forces impacting their role as students. We look to be proactive in developing intervention strategies to increase academic success, assist with conflict resolution and anger management, help students develop appropriate social interaction skills, and assist students in understanding their role in the greater community. We hope to continue to provide professional development to staff with essential information to better understand factors (cultural, societal, economic, family, health etc) affecting student's performance and behavior.

This additional staffing will help us put in place a more comprehensive collaboration between adjustment counselors/social workers, grade level cluster teachers, special educators, ELL educators and support staff.

We are also requesting funding for professional development that will help with achieving the district and school's social emotional goal. This year we had 5 educators attend the Responsive Classroom 6-8 workshop to look at middle school practices. At the middle school level, these consist of responsive advisory meeting, investing students in rules, brain breaks, small group learning, active teaching, student practice, problem-solving, structured reflection. We need to examine Middle School Responsive Classroom strategies and others such as Mind Up, Strong Kids and Second Step to determine the best practices that accomplish this goal for our learners. Ottoson teachers are eager to take on the professional development opportunities.

We want to support Teaching Assistants with more training and to look at how they support our learners in special education, ELL, regular education programs, and students on 504's by looking at the schedule, structure and models presently that are in place. We look to establish a committee of special educators and regular ed to look at programs, student needs, schedules, and placement for the academic year 2017/2018

Teaching assistants allow Ottoson teachers to provide increased opportunities to learn, more time to spend with students and on academic tasks and increased ability to assess learning and provide meaningful feedback. Teaching Assistants are the lifeline to classrooms assisting teachers.

The classroom is a dynamic place constantly changing based on the complexities of students and the multi-faceted components of the curriculum. Developing problem-

solving and thinking skills in students takes time for the teacher to collaborate with students to bring out and enhance that ability at deep levels. The main focus of curriculum initiatives is individualization and differentiation. Teachers work hard to understand each student's skill level to enrich, review or practice. They need to be able to provide time for students to engage in quality lessons and get in-depth feedback on their assignments.

As a result of differentiation and individualization come developing varied groupings which teaching assistants can support. In these small groups, in-depth understanding is developed through experimentation, discussion and project-based learning. All these groups need physical space in an inclusion classroom.

Class size also impacts teachers in how they engage student participation in each of these activities. The present 8<sup>th</sup> grade class size is 22 while the sixth grade is 24/25 moving upward which will be the case with the incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders given the increase of about 40 more students to the present enrollment of 1215 students. Teaching assistants help support all students particularly in large class sizes.

Middle school is an important time for students to explore their interests. Our exploratory classes offer avenues to do this. The additional FTE's for next year as we look at minimal increases of the following:

1.2 in World Languages:0.2 Latin- There are 66 students enrolled in 6th grade Latin. It is highly likely that most or all students will continue with Latin next year into 7th grade. We are currently running two sections of 7th grade Latin. If we keep only two sections next year, the class average will be high.

.4 French/.6 Spanish - French enrollment in the French program at the middle school has doubled with no new staff to offset class size increase. Our 8th grade French class average size is 27. Our 6th grade Spanish class size average is 25 and our 8th grade Spanish class is 25. We anticipate continued high levels of enrollment in both languages.

.4 in Visual Art - Centered on enrollment growth and to support the work in art especially the digital lab for 8th graders.

.2 DML - Digital Media Learning to expand the offering beyond 6th grade

1.0 Reading Teacher- to support students needing specialized reading instruction.

I did want to highlight/support the resource needs for Ottoson:

- Latin Textbooks/Digital Subscriptions – The current middle school Latin books are falling apart. We propose purchasing a class set with online textbook access.

- Visual Art Supplies – While enrollment has grown, funding for expendable art supplies has remained static and the department has added a digital component to the curriculum. We are requesting an increase for expendable art materials.
- We request new science textbooks and digital subscriptions for grade 6 full implementation.
- Music Department would like 10 more risers, and 3 keyboard pianos.

In closing, just want to say that it is exciting time of change for the Ottoson Middle School coming up and I know that with change brings great opportunity. As we begin to discuss the possibilities for teaching and learning at the 6th grade Gibbs that we continue to discuss how to best support and engage the staff and students at the future 7/8th grade Ottoson as well. In both schools building a link to each other through leadership collaboration, sharing best practices, curriculum alignment, open communication, and teacher capacity will benefit all middle school learners in the years ahead.

Thank you.