

**Arlington High School
Budget Discussion Overview
Arlington School Committee Meeting
December 15, 2016**

Arlington High School currently enrolls 1303 students in a 400,000 square foot facility. The school is highly ranked, and we have risen relative to other local schools over the past 3 years.

For the third year in a row, AHS is ranked among the top high schools in Massachusetts according to MCAS scores. We are recognized again as a U.S. News & World Report gold medal school, a U.S. News & World Report STEM school, a Newsweek Top School, and among the nation's most challenging schools according to the Washington Post. This year, we again received a level 1 designation from the state for overall achievement and progress on the MCAS and graduation rates.

This year, we have addressed district goals through focusing particular attention on our advisory program, creation of the Harbor and Short Stop programs to better support student health challenges, development of the AHS Voices United initiative to fight bullying, expansion of our use of technology to student devices through "bring your own device," and a host of other efforts.

Infrastructure continues to be a challenge. This year, we have begun the journey toward a newly renovated building by entering the eligibility phase of a building project with the Massachusetts Building Authority (MSBA). However, with groundbreaking at least 3 years away, the condition of the school continues to be a significant drain on the educational environment. The school continues to be on warning by NEASC for the condition of its building and infrastructure. I continue to commend the staff and students for their resilience in providing such a high quality education under such trying conditions. To continue to keep and attract these teachers over the next years will require us to make current investments in appropriate class sizes, adequate facilities, and effective instructional technology.

Curriculum and Staffing

The high school is experiencing rapid enrollment growth which is expected to increase going forward. Overall enrollment has increased by 86 students, from 1217 in SY 2013 to 1303 in SY 2017. We expect an additional increase of 80 students over the coming year and reach 1549 students by SY 2020. Our staffing increases over the past 3 years have not kept pace with this enrollment growth. The additional staffing to cover these 80 additional students at our current ratios would be 5.6 FTE. Given the increasing stresses on the staff and building, the staff and administration have all argued, however, that the first priority is for a Dean to help support teachers and our most at-risk students. We also strongly support the role of a K-12 Guidance Director to help coordinate social emotional learning and student support across the district.

Requested by the admin and staff - to reduce stress on the teachers and support student achievement - 3d Dean to cover rising expectations, evaluation, and enrollment

- Dean - 1.0

The average student load for teachers in the core content areas remains high, ranging from 20.5-20.8 students per class. The distribution of students is resulting in an increasing proportion of high class sizes for academic classes.

- o Science 31% are 25 or over
- o History 26% are 25 or over
- o Math 21% are 25 or over
- o English 20% are 25 or over
- o WL 20% are 25 or over

Elective classes are at their caps, based on safety and equipment. This means more students are unscheduled.

We foresee the following trends continuing to put pressure on staff.

- Rising enrollment. Enrollment growth continues to be high and unpredictable. We would like staffing levels that attract and keep quality faculty, maintain room for growth, and allow us to respond to student needs.
- Chapter 222 requires schools to educate students who were previously excluded due to felony charges or expelled.
- Student trends point toward higher levels of social-emotional challenges among students.
- State accountability guidelines call for ever rising levels of student achievement and graduation rates.
- Evaluation requirement for building administrators to observe every faculty member and for buildings to evaluate all faculty every year.

We are requesting the following staffing increases:

Necessary for enrollment, staff excellence, student achievement, curriculum requirements, and safety issues (3.8 FTE)

- Math - 0.4
- English - 1.0
- Social Studies History - 0.6
- Science Biology/ Physics - 0.6
- World Language French - 1.0 French/Spanish and 0.2 Mandarin

Dependent on enrollment trends (1.0 FTE)

- Family and Consumer Science - 0.4
- Visual Art Digital - 0.4
- Internships and Learning Beyond School - 0.2

Increase support for social emotional needs of students

Social-emotional health and school climate continue to be a major focus and a major concern at the high school. We have had Professional Development for all staff on issues of cultural competency, suicide prevention, and gender identity. These efforts will continue throughout the year.

This year our Transition Program realigned to become Harbor and Short Stop. Short Stop supports students requiring short term support on their return from health or other educational interruptions. Harbor is there to support students with chronic or complex health issues that require ongoing support and skill development.

Through the AHS Voices United initiative, each month, groups of approximately 30 students come together in all-day leadership workshops led by trained staff members. This training is designed to help students understand and address instances of bullying, bias, harassment and degrading language among their peers. More information is available here at this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GboJ_Th2OYraQQkOGosbxFTbjhCwYnQxU5Oy4gfh74k/edit?usp=sharing

The Advisory Program launched in 2015-16 continues to grow and mature. Our student leadership, supported by an expanded Student Government and athletic Captain's Council has begun a range of initiatives to support an inclusive climate at the high school.

Digital Technology

Digital technology is changing the potential for engaging and supporting all learners, preparing students for a computer rich economy, and allowing students to engage directly with creating knowledge and influencing their world.

With support from the capital committee, Arlington Educational Foundation grants, and teacher innovations, we have achieved some remarkable improvements in instructional technology over the past three years. Teachers have been equipped with Macbook laptops. All classrooms have working projectors. Wireless and network upgrades have made internet access more reliable throughout the building. Google apps for education have been widely adopted throughout the building, with teachers creating at least a basic site and many adapting their entire classroom to this new platform.

This year, with support from AEF and the capital committee we have introduced

- Chromebook carts in the history/math wing and World Languages, giving every department or building wing access to at least one class set of chromebooks or iPads.
- Refurbished Mac and PC laptops are in use in World Language, in student support programs, and in the Family and Consumer Science food labs.
- A digital laser cutter is currently being installed to bring digital manufacturing to our

Makerspace (AEF grant support)

- At the heart of these efforts, student devices have been welcomed to classrooms and the district network through a Bring Your Own Device program. This is outlined in the AHS Bring Your Own Device Agreement found at this link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t-o58x_g8diWvLLdRh1c2G2RMIQddEhx5f9uRUq5q-k/edit?usp=sharing

To provide a 21st Century Education (not necessarily supported through the capital committee request):

- Teacher laptops are due for replacement. Many are failing.
- Continue to invest in Wireless and Network capacity and reliability
- Staffing for the Makerspace to allow interdisciplinary use and expansion of elective offerings.
- Funding for replacement and repairs to essential instructional technology such as laptops and projectors.

Building

Over the past three years, we have worked closely with the town maintenance and custodial departments to improve the management and staffing of the facilities. Our Assistant Principal has attended closely to maintenance, custodial, and security issues. As a result, we have seen improved cleanliness and repairs. In spite of discussions about future high school renovation, it is imperative that we support efforts to keep the current learning environment clean and in good repair for the current students and our staff. Building maintenance issues have a major impacts on morale, education, safety, and security.

We have made some stop gap measures to badly aging facilities, but need to invest in some major repairs to maintain a safe educational environment over the next 3-5 years.

- Support allocations to routine maintenance and repairs in particular security and restrooms.
- Allocate funding to convert more spaces into instructional, science labs, office, storage, and computer lab, spaces.
- Realign facilities staffing to create an oversight position for the entire AHS facility and fields.

Athletics

Our Athletic Director, Melissa Dlugolecki will present on changes to budget to have it reflect the historical costs of athletics, rising registrations, and rising costs.

Athletics experienced continued growth and progress over the past year. Teams excelled on the field with league titles, state finalists and a state champion, qualifiers for Nationals and broken school records. Off the field, our registration numbers continue to rise, we received a Community Service and Leadership award from the state association, and were recently selected by the MIAA to fill three seats on their select Student Ambassador team, where Arlington students will serve as examples and ambassadors to over 300 schools throughout the state teaching leadership, teamwork and communication. Our captains' council, coaches advisory and newly formed parent vision team are all committed to building the pride and unity while maintaining the strong history and tradition amongst our programming.

This year, we are seeking an increase of \$93,965 to bring us to the same level requested last year, \$906,965. This will meet the true costs of previously underfunded and now growing programs.

We found that among other variables, the following drove primary rise in costs:

- Rise in transportation
- Rise in facility costs
- Improved maintenance of our investments
- Longer seasons and more athletes
- Full time athletic trainer to support growing needs/safety

The support and funding granted last year is greatly appreciated and allows for us to make progress in fully supporting our programming. But we are still not at the figure we need to be. Transportation, officials, facilities, staffing are fixed costs and comprise the majority of our funding, so without an increase, the areas impacted are ones that are most noticeable and impactful to our coaches and student-athletes. Our current funding is below that of the schools with which we compete who field and support the same number of students athletes and coaches.

Research supports the many benefits of participation in high school educational athletics including improved grades, lowered disciplinary issues, strengthening the skills of of commitment, communication and teamwork while building confidence and supporting the social-emotional needs of adolescents.