

Arlington High School
Budget Discussion Overview
Arlington School Committee Meeting
December 13, 2018

Arlington currently enrolls 1381 high school students in a 400,000 square foot facility. The school continues to be highly ranked. We have consistently risen in rankings and closed achievement gaps over the past 6 years. We are recognized again as a U.S. News & World Report Gold Medal school rising to 9th in the state. We are 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.

Our budget priorities for this year echo our ongoing efforts and challenges. Rising enrollment and staffing needs form the core of our budget requests. In addition, AHS continues to focus on supporting high expectations for all students with specialized instruction and a positive school climate. The aging and cramped facility continues to hamper our efforts and, while we anticipate new spaces in 4 years, we will continue to need to maintain existing and create new learning spaces.

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

- 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.
- A shortage of art, PE, and elective classes is making it difficult for students to meet requirements and build their schedules.
- Chapter 222 requires schools to educate students who were previously excluded due to felony charges or expelled.
- Moving away from punitive discipline toward positive behavioral support demands more time and relationship building of staff and administration.
- National and local 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.

Curriculum and Staffing

The high school continues to experience rapid enrollment growth. Overall enrollment has increased by 178 students since SY 2013 with an increase of 70 students in the past year. We expect an additional **increase of 43 students** in the next year and to reach **1755 students by SY 2024**. Our staffing increases over the past 5 years have not kept pace with this enrollment

growth. Below, we have created a 5-year timeline of staffing increases that will allow us to anticipate those increases in a timely fashion. I explain each line below.

School Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ENROLLMENT INCREASE	42	73	79	63	55
1. Classroom Teachers	3	5	5.6	4.4	4
2. Special Ed	0.20	0.40	0.60	0.40	0.40
3. Dean			1.00		
4. House Secretary	0.5		0.5		
5. Guidance		1.00			0.50
6. Historical Understaffing	2				
7. Inclusion	1.4			0.8	
8. Related Service (PT, Speech)			1		
9. Compass and Retain OOD	2	1		?	?
10. Team Chair	0.6	0.4			
11. Service Only/Private Chair		0.5			
TOTAL FTE	9.70	7.80	8.70	5.60	4.90

1-5. **Classroom Teachers.** The additional staffing to cover the classroom needs of 43 additional students at our current ratios would be **3 FTE**. The MSBA sets the average class size at 20, understanding that this results in classes ranging from 17-23 under appropriate staffing levels. This allows for normal variation based on scheduling and distribution as well as for planned support classes that are smaller by design. Each teacher is then responsible for roughly 100 students. With 7 class periods and an average class size of 20, we require 1.4 FTE of classroom teachers for each 20 additional students. In addition, those students gradually increase the need for support roles such as Special Education, Deans, and Guidance.

2. **Special Education Caseloads.** We are requesting an addition of **0.2 FTE** to Special Education this year to cover the anticipated increase in caseload. Roughly 11.5% of our students have IEPs and special education teachers carry a caseload of 18 students. The increased increase next year would require an addition of 0.2 FTE.

3-4. **House System - Dean.** Last year, we were able to move to a third full time Dean and to return to a three house system, reopening Collumb House. I will discuss the positive impact of this change later. Our goal is to create houses of under 500 students in keeping with the vision in our Educational Program developed for the new building. While we were able to assign one Dean and two Guidance Counselors to each house, we were not able to provide the same 0.5 FTE secretarial support to keep the office open and track student attendance. When we begin to approach 1755, we will also want to plan for an additional house, in anticipation of the new

building and a 4 house system.

5. **Guidance.** Our contract calls for Guidance caseloads under 300. In addition, NEASC and professional standards for high school guidance call for caseloads under 250, recognizing the importance and burden of graduation, career, and college planning. Last year, we prioritized adding a 6th Guidance Counselor, in order to support a three-house system. This means that we will not begin to go over our target until the following year.

6. **Understaffing.** To address existing understaffing issues, we request an additional **2 FTE** of teachers. As noted above, our staffing levels have not kept pace with enrollment growth. The result is large class sizes and a shortage of elective options, creating scheduling challenges and limited choices for students. We have directed staffing increase to the core academic areas, nonetheless, we have many sections over 25 or 27. This is a particular issue in the sciences, where our small labs create significant educational and safety issues for oversize classes.

English: 13% (9 ≥ 25, 5 ≥ 27)

Math: 26% (17 ≥ 25, 9 ≥ 27)

History: 27% (18 ≥ 25, 11 ≥ 27)

Science: 40% (28 ≥ 25, 19 ≥ 27)

Electives are all full and many students are not able to get classes they request. This year, for example, we had enough requests for 4 additional sections of Culinary Arts and 4 additional sections of Foundations of Art. We see a steady increase of students who are not able to change classes or organize their schedule because of the lack of open sections in electives.

7. **Co-Taught Inclusion Classes.** We are requesting **1.4 FTE** to support increased student achievement through co-taught inclusion classes. Last year, we expanded our commitment to support all students achieving at a college-college career ready standard. Beginning three years ago, we piloted co-taught models to support students in our Curriculum B level courses. With appropriate support, we found that students can be accelerated in their learning to access college preparatory curriculum (Curriculum A). This helped students on IEPs, ELL students, students with interrupted educations, and other students in need of support. Last year, we created co-taught classes at the Curriculum A level in all but a few required content area classes. While the model has been successful, we have found that high needs students have become overly concentrated in those classes. In the coming year, we plan to reinforce our commitment to inclusion by increasing the number of co-taught sections so that students with IEPs are not more than a third of a normal class size.

9. **Compass and Specific Student Needs.** We need **2 FTE** to support the needs of specific student populations who would otherwise require out of district placements. Over the past 5 years, AHS has been working to expand our offerings to support students with high level needs for specialized instruction. This might mean the creation of stronger substantially-separate programming, or training and support for students with unique needs in the general education

classroom. We have significantly improved the capacity of our Reach Program, serving autistic students or students with related needs, and our Summit Program, serving students with social-emotional needs. This allows us better serve and retain students who might otherwise have needed to go out of the district for educational services. As we look at the incoming populations, we see the need to create a Compass Program, for students with cognitive disabilities and to expand our support for students with specific needs.

Growth in the demands of special education also calls for an addition 0.6 FTE Team Chair. To support our 3 house system, we are requesting an **0.5 FTE** secretary for Collumb House.

10. **Team Chair.** We are requesting 0.6 FTE for a Special Education Team Chair. The special education needs at the high school continue to expand as our numbers increase and as we retain students with higher levels of support. In spite of this, we have continued to staff only one Team Chair position to coordinate the IEP process and educational planning. We envision adding an additional role over the next two years.

11. **Service Only Team Chair.** In the year after next, we are requesting a part-time Team Chair at the district level for students who are receiving services in independent schools.

Focus on Positive School Climate

In the past year, our mission of “learning, connecting, and caring in a safe, supportive, and inclusive community” is reflected in our implementation of Collaborative Problem-Solving, Wellness Day, and Inclusion Day, as well as ongoing efforts to improve social-emotional learning and cultural competency among students and staff.

Over the past year, the entire administrative team has gone through extensive training and coaching in a research-based approach to student behavior known as Collaborative Problem-Solving. The approach provides staff with skills and process for addressing behavior issues as an issue of skill building rather than punitive control. All staff have gone through at least introductory training. We have partnered with Think:Kids at Massachusetts General Hospital, to assess readiness and move toward full implementation and training over a three-year period. The early impact of the program has been a significant improvement in student behavior, illustrated by a reduction of suspensions from 76 in 2016-17 to 40 in 2017-18. In order to fully implement training we anticipate a need for \$50,000 in professional development funding.

Last year, we worked to expand our experience and offerings related to social-emotional learning and cultural competency with training and events for students and staff. These included the Unity Project at the beginning of the year. In addition, we piloted Wellness Day and Inclusion Day, 4-hour conferences combining student, staff, and outside expert workshops to provide a range of activities to students and staff. This year, student groups including a Voices United Club and a Black Student Union have begun to build more ongoing engagement with building a

positive school community. We continue to experiment with ways to engage students in this programming and content.

Digital Technology

In only five years, digital technology at AHS has transformed our approach to teaching and learning, providing new opportunities 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 the introduction of a [Bring Your Own Device](#) program in SY 2015-16 year, AHS has moved to an environment where all students expect and are expected to have access to digital technology for teaching and learning. Our Makerspace program is launching a new interdisciplinary Certificate in Innovation and Design Thinking, to link hands on learning to students' efforts in the classroom, clubs, and community.

Past support from the capital committee, Arlington Educational Foundation grants, and teacher innovations lead to successful implementation in the first cycle of Mac laptops. In the past year, APS has looked to find cost effective ways to replace our first generation of laptops. Many departments have transitioned to cheaper chromebooks and we continue to work to provide effective access to digital technology in ways that are cost effective.

This year, we are excited to have upgraded our Digital Media/CADD Lab and our Music Technology Lab. Space and funding issues required us to consolidate the Media/CADD Lab into one of our existing Library Computer Labs. In the future building, we expect these to each have their own appropriate space and equipment. Space issues also limit the number of seats in these classes.

Teacher devices, student devices, classroom projection, wireless access, internet access, specialty labs, and database subscriptions all need constant upkeep, renewal, and improvement. Specifically we need:

- Ongoing replacement and supplies for new staff and classrooms for of teacher devices is underway with a mix of Macbook Air computers and chromebooks.
- Funding for replacement and repairs to accessories and connectivity such as projectors, cords, DVD players, software, and bulbs.
- Student devices need replacement and increased numbers for classroom, study hall, and library use.
- Continue to invest in Wireless and Network capacity and reliability

AHS Bring Your Own Device Agreement found at this link:

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

Building

The Arlington community is abuzz with planning and visions for the new Arlington High School. This is an exciting project and I hope that everyone in the school and community will contribute. The vision for this project is already driving innovation and exploration among AHS teachers.

However, in the excitement of this planning, it's important to remember that our students will be using the current building for the next 4-7 years. Over the past four 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. Last year, we carved three additional classrooms from closets and offices. Each classroom space requires at least \$15,000 in furnishings and repairs. While it is hard to imagine where to find the space, we will need to create at least 3 more classrooms for new teachers and should also anticipate the need for an additional science lab for \$70,000.

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 impact 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 4-7 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.