

Good Evening School Committee Members,

I am happy to be here this evening to represent Kristin DeFrancisco and myself as the administrative staff at the Gibbs sixth grade school. She is unable to be here due to a commitment to her daughter. She apologizes that she was unable to attend. We would like to begin by saying thank you for the support you gave us last year to launch a school that includes an embedded social emotional program and acknowledges the developmental changes that sixth graders are experiencing at this time in their education. In our first year at Gibbs we were staffed to support five learning communities. The learning communities at Gibbs all include a math, science, social studies and ELA teacher. In an effort to build a strong connection amongst teachers, we have attached exploratory learning community class teachers to these groups. You will be happy to learn that this has been very effective in creating culture and climate. It has made a big difference for teachers as they develop relationships with students. We are also able to provide small advisory groups. There are 35 small groups that meet 4 times in a six day cycle and this has also made a difference for students as they are navigating the next phase of their education. The staffing that you supported last year will sustain us for the FY20 budget. We were supported to create a schedule that is planting the seeds for project based learning, co-teaching, cultural proficiency and robust programming around social emotional learning. Our numbers will increase somewhat next year but not so much that the staff for daily operations will change.

The priorities that you will hear about this evening for FY20 are the beginning steps for our five year plan. The first will be around staffing in the areas of special education, our exploratory classes, math intervention and nursing.

Our requests related directly to staffing are as follows:

- First, we want to make sure we are creating appropriate programming for our special education students that need substantially separate learning environments. To do so we need to build our staffing out further to support small group classes as the population of students at Gibbs will change from year to year. This would involve adding a 1.0 FTE special education teacher to keep the groups of students small at state required ratios (numbering 8, unless you add a TA then the maximum would be 12) as well as create cohorts based on student academic and social emotional need. This additional staff add would accomplish this for us next year. In addition, we currently have a .4 FTE speech and language pathologist and at the current allocation it has proven difficult to schedule students with this service on their IEPs. Based on numbers alone, we would like to increase this position by .2 FTE to a .6 FTE.
- The second staffing need would be in our areas of Physical Education, Art, Technology, Digital Media Literacy and World Language. Currently, these classes are larger than we would like them to be. A combination of the number of staff and the schedule constraints causes classes to be unbalanced when students are learning outside of their Learning

Communities. While in time I will have a better understanding of exact numbers, for year FY20 this would involve adding a .2 PE teacher as well as an increase in our world language staff in accordance with data when course selections are made in late winter.

- This year the math department shifted to ask each math teacher to take on an additional class of intervention for their learning communities. This means that these teachers do not teach project block. This shift helped us launch the first year at Gibbs and we would like to bring the the original model back and add a 1.0 math interventionist. This will allow for co-teaching in small group math classes, increase our ability to deliver tier two instruction consistently and allow math teachers to teach project block.
- Finally, there will be an increase in medical need at the Gibbs next year as well. Sue Franchi has been careful to make sure we are mindful of this higher medical need for students as they move to Gibbs. It will be difficult for one nurse to maintain the daily medical care next year based on this data. In addition, the nurse is an integral part of our social emotional wellness program. She has moved to the Gibbs from Hardy for this purpose as her work there produced the lowest number of visits related to anxiety. This decrease in number was directly impacted by her involvement in social emotional and mindfulness programming. This increase would also provide time for this important work. We will be asking for a .5 add.

Our non-staffing priorities are as follows:

- First, we want to be able to build the professional development around the programming we have started for sixth graders. In order for this programming to be successful, we will be building in Professional Development in the areas of project based learning, co-teaching and sustaining the Social Emotional Learning programming that we have launched. While we have not selected specific programs, we support the special education request for funding to provide onsite coaching through a district-wide consultant to general education and special education teams as we begin to develop a common practice for teachers in co-taught classes that is grounded in evidence- and research-based best practices.
- In order to support our project based learning initiative, we would like to be able to provide classroom coverage so that teachers on our PBL team can visit schools in other districts who are successfully implementing projects. Upon their return we will be able to have staff workshops. This is an area in which the district is trying to grow. Even in our infant stages, we were selected by MAPLE (a Massachusetts consortium created to catalyze personalized learning in the Commonwealth with the purpose of better preparing students for their future) as a school to present our planning around launching PBL and one of our projects from this first trimester. Students will be talking about their experiences and presenting their project! We will be doing so at the MAPLE conference

in January and then we will also be hosting a walk through of our school in April during a project block time. This is exciting for us as a school and district and this funding will help us to continue moving forward with this initiative. Finally, to sustain our foundation of Responsive Classroom and social emotional learning we would want to continue to have training in summer around our work. This number would depend on the number of new staff and the number of teachers that will be eligible for advanced training.

Thank you for having us this evening! It was important to Kristin and I that you were able to hear tonight that Gibbs has had a wonderful launch because of the support this committee and the district has given to its mission. You should know that parents have been overwhelmingly positive about their sixth graders' experiences, students are happy to come to school and teachers are working very hard to keep many new things afloat. As we move forward and begin the work next year to launch our 5 year strategic plan, we look forward to the strengthening of the programming mentioned this evening as well as the vertical alignment with the Ottoson that will be necessary to provide a consistent middle school experience. Thank you.