



To: Board of Estimation and Taxation

From: Dr. Toni Jones

Date: April 25, 2020

Re: Proposed Budget Reductions

In response to the BET's discussion during the budget workshop this Thursday, GPS senior administration started working to determine what a reduction to our operating budget in the magnitude of \$3,000,000 would mean to the education of the students in our excellent school system. At the outset of the budget process, it was challenging to bring a 2% budget increase this year given that contractual, mandatory and other fixed costs (which represent more than 90% of the budget) are expected to run significantly higher than 2%. In addition, as we have discussed, the proposed budget already contains a shortfall of approximately \$1.5 million for out of district special education expenses that were identified after this budget was voted on by the Board of Education. Additional budget reductions have been even more difficult to address. In the last 10 months we have already eliminated or frozen multiple positions to gain efficiencies, including:

- Assistant Director of Food Service
- Assistant Director of Human Resources
- Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent

GPS acknowledges that COVID-19 is pushing families, services, and the entire community into uncharted waters. And, most likely this will not end soon. In examining the budget, there are some areas where GPS may be able to adjust in order to reach a level of magnitude which would not devastate the system we know. We are operating on the premise that we want to be least disruptive of the teaching and learning happening in classrooms between teachers and students. It is important to note that some of these proposals are only deferrals, rather than permanent cuts.

Please keep in mind that anything I share with the BET has not been vetted by the Board of Education, and ultimately this is their budget. Unfortunately, due to the timing of your workshop on Thursday and vote on Monday it does not allow for the Board of Education to meet and discuss this topic and offer guidance. As such, this information is meant to be representative of what could transpire.

Possible areas for adjustment:

ITEM	RATIONALE	COST REDUCTION
Supplementary Funding	We are working to utilize funds differently, including grant funds and will work to create an efficiency	\$150,000
Special Education Study	We would rather keep funds for staff, and possibly look for a grant or donor(s) to fund the study.	\$60,000
Reduce administrative assistant positions across GPS	Evaluate and consolidate	\$100,000
Software	Software reduction, to be determined	\$100,000
Downgrade from 2 Assistant Superintendents to 1 with a second position at a lower level	Reassignment of duties after departure of Assistant Admin will result in savings	\$40,000
Consolidate Bus Routes and Fuel Savings	Run more efficiently, including consolidating private school routes	\$100,000
Eliminate All New Library Book Purchases for 1 Year	Look for donations or grants to help off-set new literature being released	\$138,000
Eliminate Some State and National Conference Travel	Travel will be very limited given the COVID-19 concerns and this had already been reduced in previous years	\$40,000
		<b>TOTAL \$728,000</b>

## **ADDITIONAL REDUCTIONS WOULD HAVE SWEEPING IMPACTS ON STAFFING AND PROGRAMS**

An estimated **30** teachers, support staff, and administrative positions would need to be eliminated to reach a further reduction of \$2,272,000 coupled with the above \$728,000 possible reductions.

All programs would need to be evaluated for possible full-time equivalent eliminations: music, art, PE, athletics, intramurals, and more. In addition, we would have to look at changes to other substantive programs such as the Advanced Learning Program and World Languages. These are programs which are extremely important to an excellent school system. Beyond that we would need to look at funding for all extra-curricular activities, including our sports and arts programs. In addition, we would need to engage in discussions with the representative unions and review contractual language.

It would not be recommended that GPS increase class size in K-12 for core curriculum areas or grade levels given the COVID-19 advice being shared with school districts from reputable organizations. The *“Return to School Planning Documents”* are showing that across the globe schools are faced with many challenges.

- Adjusted schedules in order to keep all students maintaining social distance  
For instance, AM and PM schedules, two days per week onsite for each student.
- Class sizes of 10-12 maximum, and the only way to accomplish this type of distancing is modified schedules with half of the children on site. Increasing general education class sizes would make this more challenging, especially at GHS where there are courses with 30 students. [NPR Article from 4/24/2020](#)

Please note that there has been talk of additional families moving from the city to Greenwich as well as the likelihood that families may pull their children from private schools and return to GPS. This increased enrollment would be on top of students returning to school from a long absence, continuing to constrain the system.

I urge you to consider the magnitude of a \$3,000,000 reduction to the proposed budget, excluding the \$1,500,000 known exposure mentioned above. Significant cuts would have lasting consequences for our students, felt well beyond the immediate school year.

cc: Board of Education