Merrimack School District/SAU 26
School Board Special Meeting
Preliminary Agenda
January 4, 2022
Merrimack Town Hall – Memorial Room

Send public comments to: publiccomment@sau26.org. Comments must be received between the start of the meeting on January 4, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. and Agenda Item #4. Based on the volume of public comments received, the board chair will determine if all public comments can be read. If not, they will be incorporated into the meeting minutes.

PUBLIC MEETING

7:00 p.m. **1. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

7:05 p.m. **2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

7:20 p.m. **3. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Formal Presentation on Student Services Budget	Heather Barker
2. Formal Presentation on Merrimack High School Budget	Stephen Claire
3. Formal Presentation on the District Budget	Matt Shevenell
4. Other	

8:20 p.m. **4. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

8:30 p.m. **5. ADJOURN**

* These times are estimates and may vary depending on discussion.

2022-2023 Budget Questions and Answers: Student Services, MHS, District 1-4-2021

Question Topic	School/ Dept.	Budget Book Ref Account Number	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
SEL/ Intervention/ Cont. Serv.	Student Services	100-2122-41-8323-06	Shannon: Please provide details. It is not in the breakout and is a new expenditure of $104,000.	These funds are new in our budget to accommodate the hiring of SEL interventionists and mental health providers who can supplement and support our current building staff in meeting the diverse, complex needs of our students. This funding will be used to support all students across the district. We want to provide support in the form of embedded professional development, co-facilitation of groups and collaboration to enhance and expand both our Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III SEL supports for students. Through these collaborative relationships we can offer building-wide and small group evidence-based interventions as we continue to develop our Multitiered System of Support for all students in Merrimack. Through this strategic approach of developing the systems to support the SEL needs of our students, we will provide an aligned, cohesive system of care that is sustainable and efficient. (See Jenna's Question and Response for more detail).

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General	Student Services		Shannon: I know we are using Second Step for SEL for students through grade 6. Please advise what programs are running through your departments for middle and high school students and what funding is there to support it. If there are programs of value not in the budget I for one would be willing to entertain it considering the impact the pandemic has had on all students. Namely those who never had SEL curriculum as is the case in the higher grades since we have only had it in district for a couple of years.	Our vision for SEL across all levels is consistent with our original proposals to the board on adoption of SEL within the district. We are still in the phase of building capacity and innovating ways to ensure full integration of systemic SEL to support the advisory blocks and the extended homerooms, building on programs that both schools have already begun using grant money from the Promising Futures grant. At the high school, two teachers have led the way by building out a 9-12 executive functioning program for use in homerooms, along with extensive PD (Professional Development) materials on this topic. At our middle school, they have built their own advisory program based on Responsive Classroom for Middle School Advisories. Examples of other possible programs to augment the planned Universal programs could be the Character Strong Program for middle school, as well as grade level programs, such as Indiflix programming and an expanded freshman orientation program. The selection would be the result of close collaboration between our school-based leadership teams and district leadership.

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SEP/PT/ OT/ SPEECH	Student Services	100-1205-41-8323-06 Page 9	Jenna: On page 9 of the special services budget why are these contracted services (which are far more expensive) as opposed to full or part-time employed district staff?	Since being asked this question in my first budget presentation to the MSD School Board for the 2020-2021 school year, Student Services has been exploring the costs of employed district staff vs. contracted services. For many of these positions we cannot compete with private companies to hire school district employees. Over the past two years we have not been able to hire district speech pathologists or occupational therapy assistants for open district positions that we have. New Hampshire, like many other states, is experiencing a critical shortage in all areas of education related to special education and related services that support special education. As a result of this shortage, we have had difficulty filling our MTA positions, which we would want to fill if we could. We have had to hire additional contracted services to fill special education roles until we can hire district employees. Legally we must provide the special education and related services required in student IEPs by any means necessary. In analyzing the difference between the cost of a district employee vs. a contracted service provider for the same position, we found in working with our business office that although the district employee's salary may be lower, with the added cost of insurance, payroll taxes, and retirement, there is a marginal difference in cost at best. Assistant Superintendent Matt Shevenell can offer further details on the cost comparison if needed.

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SEL/Related Services/ High School	Student Services	100-2149-41-8323-30 Page 10	Jenna: I would like to understand why that budget line more than doubled. I see the one-line explanation there, but I would like a more detailed explanation.	For the 2020-2021 Student Services Budget, we moved funding for contracted services from other budget lines to the school level lines in the budget. The amount allocated in the 2020-2021 budget was not reflective of the total amount of contracted services for the high school. Additional contracted services were reflected in other budget lines. We moved the funds from the other lines to this line for transparency and better understanding of what is being spent in the special education budget. Although it looks like that budget line went from $125K to $315K, it did not. The money was reduced in one budget line and placed in this budget line to better reflect the cost of services at each school level. There is an increase in this budget line of $10K to ensure that we can meet our obligations for compensatory services and additional services necessary because of the learning loss/gaps created by the pandemic and interrupted school that student have experienced with IEPs.

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SEP Asst/Tutors/ Contracted Services	Student Services	100-2190-41-8324-60 Page 11	Jenna: I would like a specific and detailed explanation for what is covered in this line and why it quadrupled. The explanation is very general (i.e. "support all student's social emotional well-being across the district" is VERY general.)	For the 2020-2021 Student Services Budget, we moved funding for district-wide contracted services from other budget lines to this budget line in the budget. The amount allocated in the 2020-2021 budget was not reflective of the total amount of contracted services, as many of these were embedded in other budget lines. We reduced the funds from the other lines and moved them to this line for transparency and better understanding of what is being spent in the special education budget. There was no increase in cost for these services other than the 3% increase for anticipated wage increases. The funds in this line pay for the school social workers, transition coordinator, transition coaching, IEP mandated mental health counseling, and other student learning support personnel who serve **all** students, and students with disabilities across the school district. For 2021-2022 we have increased the funds by $10K to ensure that we can meet our obligations for additional services necessary because of the academic, social emotional, and behavioral challenges created by the Pandemic, interrupted school that student have experienced, and the increased needs of supports for families.

Question Topic	School/ Dept.	Budget Book Ref Account Number	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
SEL	Student Services		Jenna: What does the summer program look like? What is that vision?	Building out our supports for Transitions is a priority of the District System of Care Committee. Building off the limited offerings for SEL last summer, and our regular summer school programs, we have developed a budget here to cover the stipends for educators, counselors, behavior specialists, HSLs and other professional staff to support a broader array of SEL programs and transition opportunities. Last year we offered a short camp for self-regulation, which was well-received. Student participation came from parent and school team referrals. Last year we also provided a mindfulness consultant for the 8.5 program. Furthermore, counselors were available to provide school-based transitional programming for those who required it before starting school. We would like to think through the needs of students in these areas and provide creative and innovative supports.

Question Topic	School/ Dept.	Budget Book Ref Account Number	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
SEL/School Year/Elem/ Supplies	Student Services	100-2122-41-8610-10	Jenna: I am concerned about purchasing a curriculum that will fall to the teachers to learn, manage, and teach. That is the LAST thing that teachers need right now. While that curriculum looks great, I would like to see the budget allow for SEL specialists in district to be the ones to learn, master, and teacher the curriculum. (See my previous point.) I would rather invest in STAFF this year, curriculum next year. (In Hudson, we are creating our own curriculum…..it's more than enough for the year!)	2022-23 will be the 3rd year of full implementation as universal SEL program, K-6. This program was strategically rolled out, beginning in 2017. In this way we successfully built capacity and buy-in in an incremental fashion. We are at varying stages of system change, from initial implementation to elaboration and regeneration. To this end, this line item is to replace and maintain materials within the Second Step program, as well as to augment the program. We will identify areas for augmentation and ways to further integrate this program at the universal level. For instance, bullying prevention programming is an area that is ready for expansion. This funding will begin to populate the Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEL interventions, using programs such as Zones of Regulation, Social Thinking and other evidence-based interventions that can improve programming across the tiers, and address issues related to bullying. We are in the exploration of MTSS with the support of a Bureau of Wellness consultant. Over the next year to two years, we will be building our universal, secondary and tertiary teams, and at that time we will be exploring the staffing of the three tiers. Culture and readiness are critical in the success and implementation of this work.

Question Topic	School/ Dept.	Budget Book Ref Account Number	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
SEL/ Interven-tion/Cont. Serv.	Student Services	100-2122-41-8323	Jenna: I do NOT want to see out SEL services contracted out. I think this is a poor use of funds and it does not serve our population best. What contracted services specifically are you envisioning? My other concern comes from the wording in the description of SEL being provided for students "identified as highly at-risk". Obviously, we need to give this population all of the support they need to succeed. However, a TON of resources are generally available to those considered highly at-risk. I would hope that our vision for SEL would be targeted at ALL students. I would like to see strategic and coordinated Tier 1 supports adopted in a meaningful way that builds SEL skills from PreK to Grad 12 supported by part of full-time staff positions. I feel that this money-or maybe SLIGHTLY more-would be better utilized to start building a staff team (part of full time) to drive SEL initiatives in buildings and provide SEL support to students at the building level. I would like to see the purpose of this line item change and the amount adjusted if necessary.	We are currently in the exploration phase of the district-wide adoption of an MTSS-B system, working with a consultant from the Bureau of Student Wellness. While we work on constructing and aligning this system, we want to continue using contracted support. Done well, this could evolve into full-time district employees that can meet student SEL needs in the future as an integrated member of the MTSS system of care. Currently, the vision is to hire SEL support staff who can offer short-term, solution focused SEL interventions at Tier 2 or Tier 3, integrating this work into the SEL programming within the school setting. This person could also offer professional development to support helper groups or even collaborate with staff to provide needed support. While piloted through Student Services, this could support any student in the building. Research strongly supports systemically integrated SEL, including Tier 1 support provided by teachers and support staff within classroom settings and supported by schoolwide Tier 1 structures. We agree that the vision is for all students, Pre-K-12 having meaning SEL experiences that develop the core competencies needed for wellness and success in school and beyond. Through this strategic approach of developing the systems to support the SEL needs of our students, we will provide an aligned, cohesive system of care that is sustainable and efficient.

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Co-curricular	Student Services	100-1207-41-8114	Shannon: I see for good reason paraeducator budgets for co-curricular activities. The funds are allocated but unutilized. What can be done to increase participation so there is inclusion and fulfillment by those who would be in receipt of these supports? As much as it helps those kids by participating, I am a firm believer it also helps ALL students having such an inclusive environment in all areas. Shannon: How are these accounts level funded considering there is a contractual salary increase with our existing collective bargaining agreement with MESSA?	The funds allocated to the budget line are specifically for the inclusion of students with disabilities in co-curricular, extracurricular, and after school sponsored events, so that they can have equal access and participation. The funds are used to remove barriers to participation and offer opportunities to experience the same opportunities as neurotypical peers. Additionally, it offers all students the benefits of an inclusive community. Building leadership teams and IEP teams can advocate for increased opportunity for participation in our current offerings and explore other opportunities that may not be currently offered for neurotypical and neurodiverse students to participate in clubs, sports, and other activities together. Both special education and civil rights laws require that school districts provide equal access and equal opportunity for students with disabilities. The level funding is the result of the MESSA contract's stipulation that new employees come in at the bottom three steps regardless of years of service. As experienced paraeducators have left, we are replacing them with employees whose costs are less. Therefore, no increase is necessary currently.

Question Topic	School/ Dept.	Budget Book Ref Account Number	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
Summer Programs	Student Services	100-1280-41-8122	Shannon: How are we level funding summer programs for educational gains as we are working to close pandemic-related gaps in learning?	For the Student Services Budget 2020-2021, we anticipated the need for extended learning opportunities and programs for students due to the Pandemic. We also anticipated the need for compensatory education due to delaying some services. We increased these budget lines by about $90K to provide COVID related and compensatory education last summer and successfully provided appropriate and necessary specialized instruction and related services to our students throughout the summer and beyond the typical five-week ESY period when needed. Rather than reducing the funding back to pre-pandemic costs, we have chosen to keep the funding at this higher lever to accommodate the pandemic related learning gaps, need for increased specialized instruction, and any compensatory education required due to disrupted learning from quarantine, COVID, etc. We will offer extended summer programs again this year using these funds. Therefore, no increase is necessary currently.

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Co-curricular	MHS	100-2725-20-8519-31	Shannon: We have as a board worked to gain equal funding between athletics and co-curricular funding. This year's budget shows co-curriculars getting $20K less.	In terms of transportation, co-curricular groups have not traveled to a scheduled event or have not been denied transportation. We level-funded co-curricular to reflect more accurately what we spend.
Co-curricular	MHS	100-1420-20-8613-31	Shannon: Athletic supplies are funded at $91K while Co-Curricular supplies are funded at $16K. We are aware of the investments students have to make for their own uniforms, etc. for co-curriculars to wear in competition and the funding required for supplies to participate in programs that would not be possible without corporate sponsors stepping in. Please provide what students are being asked to fund to participate in co-curriculars that may be preventing participation.	Athletic supplies do not include uniforms. It is for all athletic related supplies. The majority of the supplies includes rentals such as Merrimack 10 pin, West Side arena, the Merrimack YMCA, Gymnastics academy in Manchester and GPS for Soccer. 45 to 50K in rentals alone. Students are not being asked to fund any Co-curricular supplies. Money is not preventing students from participating in Co-Curricular.

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	MHS	100-1420-24-8610-31	Shannon: Why are there needed materials listed but no funding allocated for Unified Soccer? I see minimal references to uniforms. How often are they purchased or are students purchasing their own? Shannon: Why do students pay for their own graduation cords? It seems like we are not rewarding their dedicated participation to the programs.	We are not budgeting for Unified Soccer because we do not have enough student interest to field a team. The line item was left in but $0 was budgeted. Students do not purchase them on their own. Every 3 to 5 years through a rotation system. Every uniform has been replaced once throughout the last 5 years. Over the years, there has been an increase in Co-curricular clubs.
Athletics/Equipment Repairs/HS Athletic/Equipment Repl/MHS	MHS	100-1420-24-8430-31 Page 5 100-1420-24-8739-31 Page 32	Jenna: On page 5 I see there is $12,300 budgeted to pay for helmet and shoulder pad repairs. Then on page 32, in line 100-1420-24-8739 there is $7,000 budgeted for replacing 20 football helmets and 15 shoulder pads. I'm confused why that is budgeted twice.	The $12,300 is for repairing helmets (softball, baseball, football, lacrosse) such as fixing chin straps. Once repaired, helmets have to go through a certification process, which is an additional cost. The equipment is sanitized as well. We must have our football uniforms professionally cleaned to extend their life. The $7,000 is an additional cost to replace helmets for all sports mentioned above. They need to be replaced because they have failed NOCSAE safety guidelines. This holds true for shoulder pads as well.

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	District	100-2210-00-8112-00	Shannon: Why is transitional academic support not part of the MHS budget?	This program is for targeted interventions administered by central office.
	District	100-2310-00-8430-00	Shannon: What would the $100K be used for (itemize) and (1) is there a likelihood there will be additional federal funding to accommodate this expense or (2) if it is not likely to get federal funding, can we look to buy proposed materials in bulk to sustain us through the next school year this year?	We have unspent federal funding in the amount of $700,000 that can be carried over into 9/30/2024. Given our uncertain everchanging future, this may or may not be enough to carry us if we need to replace disinfectant equipment, (Clorox T-360), wipes, portable sinks, and any other new emerging equipment to combat COVID. Hence the contingency account.

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Co-curricular	MHS	100-2725-20-8519-31	Shannon: We have as a board worked to gain equal funding between athletics and co-curricular funding. This year's budget shows co-curriculars getting $20K less.	In terms of transportation, co-curricular groups have not traveled to a scheduled event or have not been denied transportation. We level-funded co-curricular to reflect more accurately what we spend.
Co-curricular	MHS	100-1420-20-8613-31	Shannon: Athletic supplies are funded at $91K while Co-Curricular supplies are funded at $16K. We are aware of the investments students have to make for their own uniforms, etc. for co-curriculars to wear in competition and the funding required for supplies to participate in programs that would not be possible without corporate sponsors stepping in. Please provide what students are being asked to fund to participate in co-curriculars that may be preventing participation.	Athletic supplies do not include uniforms. It is for all athletic related supplies. The majority of the supplies includes rentals such as Merrimack 10 pin, West Side arena, the Merrimack YMCA, Gymnastics academy in Manchester and GPS for Soccer. 45 to 50K in rentals alone. Students are not being asked to fund any Co-curricular supplies. Money is not preventing students from participating in Co-Curricular.

Question Topic	School/ Dept.	Budget Book Ref Account Number	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
	MHS	100-1420-24-8610-31	Shannon: Why are there needed materials listed but no funding allocated for Unified Soccer? I see minimal references to uniforms. How often are they purchased or are students purchasing their own? Shannon: Why do students pay for their own graduation cords? It seems like we are not rewarding their dedicated participation to the programs.	We are not budgeting for Unified Soccer because we do not have enough student interest to field a team. The line item was left in but $0 was budgeted. Students do not purchase them on their own. Every 3 to 5 years through a rotation system. Every uniform has been replaced once throughout the last 5 years. Over the years, there has been an increase in Co-curricular clubs.
Athletics/Equipment Repairs/HS Athletic/Equipment Repl/MHS	MHS	100-1420-24-8430-31 Page 5 100-1420-24-8739-31 Page 32	Jenna: On page 5 I see there is $12,300 budgeted to pay for helmet and shoulder pad repairs. Then on page 32, in line 100-1420-24-8739 there is $7,000 budgeted for replacing 20 football helmets and 15 shoulder pads. I'm confused why that is budgeted twice.	The $12,300 is for repairing helmets (softball, baseball, football, lacrosse) such as fixing chin straps. Once repaired, helmets have to go through a certification process, which is an additional cost. The equipment is sanitized as well. We must have our football uniforms professionally cleaned to extend their life. The $7,000 is an additional cost to replace helmets for all sports mentioned above. They need to be replaced because they have failed NOCSAE safety guidelines. This holds true for shoulder pads as well.

Question Topic	School/ Dept.	Budget Book Ref Account Number	Questioner's Name/Question	Response
	District	100-2210-00-8112-00	Shannon: Why is transitional academic support not part of the MHS budget?	This program is for targeted interventions administered by central office.
	District	100-2310-00-8430-00	Shannon: What would the $100K be used for (itemize) and (1) is there a likelihood there will be additional federal funding to accommodate this expense or (2) if it is not likely to get federal funding, can we look to buy proposed materials in bulk to sustain us through the next school year this year?	We have unspent federal funding in the amount of $700,000 that can be carried over into 9/30/2024. Given our uncertain everchanging future, this may or may not be enough to carry us if we need to replace disinfectant equipment, (Clorox T-360), wipes, portable sinks, and any other new emerging equipment to combat COVID. Hence the contingency account.