

Arlington High School)
Budget Discussion Overview)
Arlington School Committee Meeting)
December 10, 2015)

Arlington High School currently enrolls 1265 students in a 400,000 square foot facility. The school is highly ranked, and we have risen relative to other schools. The school is ranked among the top 20 high schools in Massachusetts according to MCAS scores, up from last year. 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 new schedule and advisory program, building our capacity to engage students through instructional technology, and serving the needs of all students.

Infrastructure continues to be a challenge. The school continues to be on warning by NEASC for the condition of its building and infrastructure. With a broken elevator and our aging facility, administration is challenged to keep the physical environment from interfering with the learning environment. 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 provide them with appropriate class sizes, adequate facilities, and effective instructional technology.

Curriculum and Staffing

The high school experienced an enrollment increase of 48 students over last year. This was 24 more than was anticipated. We project an additional 15 (1280 total) for 2016-17. Our staffing levels continue to be tight and hiring for last year did not keep up with enrollment increases.

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 results in high class sizes for academic classes.

- Science 29% are 25 or over
- History 25% are 25 or over
- Math 27% are 25 or over
- English 15% are 25 or over
- WL 20% are 25 or over

Elective classes are at their caps, based on safety and equipment.

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 (3.2 FTE)

- Math Pre-Algebra / Computer Science - 0.4 !
- Dual taught Math/ High Needs - 0.4 !
- English - 0.6 !
- Social Studies History - 0.8 !
- Science Biology/ Physics - 0.6 !
- World Language French - 0.2 !
- World Language Spanish - 0.2 !

Dependent on enrollment trends (1.4 FTE)

- Family and Consumer Science - 0.2 !
- Visual Art Digital - 0.6 !
- Technical Education (Makerspace) - 0.6 !

Still 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

Increase support for social emotional needs of students

One major initiative to increase support for the social emotional needs of students is the new 5-day schedule, Xblock, and advisory. Based on feedback from students, teachers, and parents, we moved from our 7-day schedule rotation to a 5-day schedule. This helps support student organization, teacher planning, and coordination with outside organizations and activities.

The new schedule allows for a 24 minute “Xblock” on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We have created this time to provide meeting time for students and teachers as well as creating a regular advisory program. The Tuesday “Campus Period” is a break time for students and teachers. Students are required to stay on campus in supervised areas. Time can be used for meeting with teachers, club meetings, having a snack in the cafeteria, or quiet study. During the

Thursday “Activity Period,” students meet with their advisory group for activities designed to

- Create and foster connections between teachers and students
- Provide a consistent conduit for communication with students
- Create and foster positive school climate and culture

A teacher-led Xblock committee has worked with consultant, Rachel Poliner, to train staff in leading these activities that help build a positive social-emotional environment at AHS. Through practice and training in building strong relationships the AHS community as a whole will grow even stronger.

Digital Technology

With support from the capital committee, grants, and teacher innovations, we have achieved some remarkable improvements in instructional technology over the past two-years. These improvements will need to be supported and sustained over the coming years. 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. Our goal over the next two years is to develop an educational environment that combines special use labs with an environment where classrooms can expect access to instructional technology provided by the school or supplemented by devices provided by students. This is one form of a “Bring Your Own Device” or BYOD model.

All instructional staff at AHS now have an Apple laptop and every classroom is equipped with a projector. Wireless and the network have been expanded, but are still experiencing growing pains. The suite of Google Docs and Google Classroom are being used widely across the school.

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

- A laptop cart with instruments for science (AEF)
- A digital media studio combining CADD and Digital Photography (AEF)
- Classroom pilots of iPad and Chromebook class-sets in 9 sites reaching 15 classrooms and touching even more.
- Increased access to chromebooks through the media center and departments
- The three computer labs have been reconfigured to create one large Citrix lab and one equipped with Chromebooks and Citrix stations.
- STEAM Collaboration/Maker Space - A group of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics teachers have created a STEAM collaboration using the Makerspace to create hands-on learning in and out of class

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

- 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. !

- Time and funding for ongoing professional development for teachers !

Building

Over the past two 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. With the introduction of the new town Facilities Director role, Ruth Bennett has been conducting a review of our processes and needs. 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 4-6 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.
- Fully staff custodial crews (at least 10 FTE)

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.