

The Ottoson Community continues to appreciate and thanks the members of the School Committee, Superintendent Kathy Bodie, and Assistant Supt. Roderick MacNeal for supporting the work of educating our Ottoson Middle School learners. In addition we would like to thank the Arlington Community, Arlington Education Foundation and the Ottoson Parent Advisory Council for their continued financial support.

This academic year the 1,264 Ottoson students have benefited greatly from the additional staffing of a .5 adjustment counselor to address the social and emotional needs of our learners as well as the needed Latin curriculum materials.

This year's budget requests are recommended based on conversations and input from the Ottoson teachers, administrators, school improvement council, and department chairs. Our key levers continue to be quality teaching and learning, academic rigor, social/emotional learning, and individualized student learning. As a transitional leader this year the work has been centered on social and emotional and cultural proficiency instruction, the transitioning of Ottoson as a 7th and 8th grade school and ensuring a safe and supportive school climate for all learners and staff. We continue to examine our instructional practices, systems, supports and culture. An important focus has been looking at responsive discipline. We planned to accomplish this by integrating safety, civility, and social identity into our practice as well as examining bias and justice.

Ottoson educators continue to engage in professional development in order to provide students with powerful teaching practices, which will foster student achievement. Our educators continue to be committed to understanding the factors affecting student performance and social emotional learning.

We realize that every year prioritizing a budget has its challenges, and we are mindful of looking at our resources and practices in a different way but wish to frame needs for the 2018-2019 academic year for the 7th and 8th grade Ottoson students and staff.

The Middle School years occur during a critical developmental period for students. This provides us with a unique opportunity as educators and an important charge. Providing students with the necessary tools and foundation that will enable them to become responsible and capable citizens and contributing members of our community. This is not only accomplished through academic rigor, but through the learning and practice of social emotional skills and competencies that they will require throughout their lives.

With these needs in mind the budget priorities for the Ottoson align with the system goals.

We are requesting 4 clusters for 7th and 8th graders moving away from the split cluster model. The recommendation is based on the enrollment of next year's seventh grade of 445 learners and an eighth grade of 414 learners. This will result in lower class size, which impacts how teachers instruct and engage with students. This will help to create a schedule with more availability to take specific languages, coordinate if a student bypasses a math level, give teachers common planning time and create even numbers of students in sections of a given course.

We are requesting a 1.5 Adjustment Counselor, which will help our students who are increasingly affected by many social forces impacting their role as learners. We look to be proactive in developing strategies to increase academic success, assist with conflict resolution, help students develop appropriate social skills, and assist students in understanding their role in the greater community. I support this request from Sarah Burd, our director of social/emotional learning.

Teaching assistants allow Ottoson teachers to provide increase opportunities to learn, more time to spend with students and on academic tasks and increased ability to assess learning and provide meaningful feedback. The classroom is a dynamic place constantly changing based on the complexities of students and the multi-faceted components of the curriculum. Developing problem-solving and thinking skills in students take time for the teacher to collaborate with students to bring out and enhance that ability at deep levels. Ottoson teachers work hard to understand each student's skill level to enrich, review or practice. They need to be able to provide time for students to engage in quality lessons and get in-depth feedback on their assignments. As a result of differentiation and individualization come developing varied groupings which teaching assistants can support. In these small groups, in-depth understanding is developed through experimentation, discussion and project-based learning. All these groups need physical space in an inclusion classroom. We are asking for 2 teaching assistants to support this inclusion model.

Additionally due to increased enrollment in the present 6th grade we are asking for a .2 World Language Teacher for Spanish. Our Spanish class size is well over 25 – 30 students. We anticipate continued high levels of enrollment in this language next year. I support Department Chair Dawn Carney in this request.

.4 increase teacher in Visual Art is centered on after the 1.0 teacher goes to Gibbs. Ottoson will need 2.0 teachers to support the work in art especially the digital lab work.

I did want to highlight/support the resources needed for Ottoson which are recommended by the Department Chairs.

Visual Arts Supplies – While enrollment has grown, funding for art supplies has remained static and the department has added a digital component to the curriculum. I support Department Chair David Ardito in the request to increase for expendable art materials.

Ottoson Textbooks, Books and Periodicals – This is proposed by the department Chair, Larry Weathers that the up to date curriculum needs to align with the standards.

I support the Director of Social Emotional Learning in the need for Ottoson learners to have more social emotional learning supplies, and professional development reimbursement for teachers.

Department Chair William Pappazisis is recommending instructional materials for music, maintenance services for music, performing arts revised curriculum materials, performing arts association membership, performing arts professional conferences, performing arts supplies. I support this request for Ottoson.

In closing, I want to say that this is an exciting time of change and opportunity for the Ottoson Middle School Community. Our safe schools committee looked to the year 2020 where our efforts will be realized and students will have increased self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making that lay the groundwork for needed life skills. This will help them as they move through the Arlington Public Schools and beyond.

Thank you for allowing me to serve the Ottoson Middle School Community through this exciting time. I look forward to a smooth transition with the new leadership.