

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WESTON, MASSACHUSETTS

SCHOOL BUDGET

July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010



PUBLIC HEARING

7:30 P.M. MONDAY, MAY 4

TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM

TOWN MEETING

7:30 P.M. MONDAY, MAY 11

HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

ADDITIONAL SESSIONS, IF NEEDED:

7:30 P.M. WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

7:30 P.M. MONDAY, MAY 18

HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS VISION STATEMENT

The Weston Public Schools is committed to excellence in learning for further education and work, for civic responsibility, and for the love of learning.

The Weston Public Schools will achieve excellence in learning through collaboration among community, parents, administration, faculty, and students. Recognizing that learning is a lifelong process, all partners in the school community will use imagination, reflection, invention, rational inquiry and judgment to anticipate the demands of the future and to support the learning of others.

The curriculum will include both subject-based and interdisciplinary instruction for grades K-12. A Weston education will provide students with a broad knowledge base, integrating the arts, technology, communications and core academic areas. Graduates will be able to write and speak effectively, and will develop the problem solving and critical thinking skills necessary to participate productively in a constantly changing, culturally diverse and complex world.

The learning environment in Weston will stimulate and support all students in their intellectual, social, and personal growth to prepare them to become good citizens and to enable them to achieve whatever personal or career goals they pursue. Students will be encouraged to take risks and assume responsibilities; they will respect themselves and others, and be committed to serving the wider community with honesty and integrity.

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We welcome your questions, comments and suggestions regarding this publication.

Details concerning the budget summarized herein may be requested from the

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WESTON

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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To the Townspeople of Weston

The Weston Public Schools budget proposal for fiscal year 2010 is set forth in this booklet. The School Committee has undertaken to prepare a budget that we believe will maintain our tradition of excellence while at the same time recognizing current financial realities. Our budget proposal has been constructed to fit within the Selectmen's stated goal of a Town-wide budget for fiscal year 2010 that can be balanced without a tax rate increase or a Proposition 2 ½ override. The proposal before you for fiscal year 2010 of \$31,836,141 is \$1,704,453 or 5.66% more than the fiscal year 2009 budget of \$30,131,688.

In the fall of 2008, the Town's collective bargaining units voted to join the State's Group Insurance Commission, making Weston one of the very first communities in the State to take advantage of this opportunity. This effort, led in large part by the members of the Weston Education Association, will result in significant healthcare benefit cost savings to the Town in fiscal year 2010, and is a significant factor in the Town's ability to construct a budget without the need for tax increases.

Our budget proposal for fiscal year 2010 provides the necessary spending level to continue to provide high quality education for the Town's children. Approximately 99% of the increase in the proposed budget is driven by three principal areas:

- Collective bargaining agreements
- Enrollment shifts
- Special Education services

Program improvements account for only 0.40% (\$120,884) of the increase over the budget for fiscal year 2009. These improvements include updating existing academic offerings.

Weston has historically supported the schools because it recognizes the value of quality public education. The School Committee unanimously recommends this budget as a fiscally responsible plan to meet the educational needs of the Town's children. Your questions, suggestions and participation are welcome as we work together to prepare our children to become productive contributors to our society. More information about the operations of the Weston Schools is available in our 2008 Annual Report which is on our website at <http://www.westonschools.org/index.cfm?pid=16608>.

We respectfully ask for your support.

WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Maryanne Rogers, Chairman

Edward Heller

Richard A. Manley, Jr.

Court Chilton

Sanjay Saini

2009-2010 Budget Guidelines

We are fortunate to live in a town that both demands and supports an excellent school system. The School Administration has identified system needs to ensure continued excellence. These needs are summarized in a comprehensive Long Range Plan approved by the School Committee. The following general guidelines are meant to assist the School Administration in preparing the budget for fiscal year 2010. These guidelines reflect the Town's desire to maintain the overall strength of the school system by supporting the implementation of the Long Range Plan while recognizing continuing local and general economic challenges.

Preserve Excellence in Curriculum and Instruction

Execution of the Long Range Plan requires that we provide adequate resources and funding for major initiatives: In Fiscal Year 2010 this includes continued support for implementation of Differentiated Instruction and the Global Initiative. At the core of our efforts will be preserving the quality of our programs and services that enable all students to reach high standards and expectations, in addition to achieving adequate yearly progress toward 2014 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) performance goals.

Maintain a Safe and Secure Environment and Infrastructure

The budget should continue to support safe, secure and educationally sound school environments, while seeking energy conservation and appropriate efficiencies to reduce costs. We should continue to collaborate with the Town to achieve economies of scale in the maintenance and operation of our facilities. We should continue routine maintenance of our facilities, regular building reviews and the multi-year capital project plan. Technology planning should assess the needs of all networking and other infrastructure as it relates to system security and optimization.

Maintain the Rate of Budget Growth at a Responsible Level

The School Administration must continue its sensitivity to the Town's short and long-term financial constraints, including the tax burden of budgetary decisions. Our efforts this year should reflect the progress we have made, with the support of the community, in right-sizing our operations over the past several budgets. Staffing levels should be regularly assessed to be sure that they reflect changes in enrollment levels. Attention must be focused on minimum class size policy, especially for course offerings that are not part of the graduation requirements. Variations from the minimum class size policy will require the approval of the Superintendent and notice to the School Committee. Primary consideration should be given to offsetting budget reductions in support of program enhancements, as we anticipate continued Town-wide budgetary pressures in fiscal year 2010.

Factors Affecting FY'10 Educational Costs

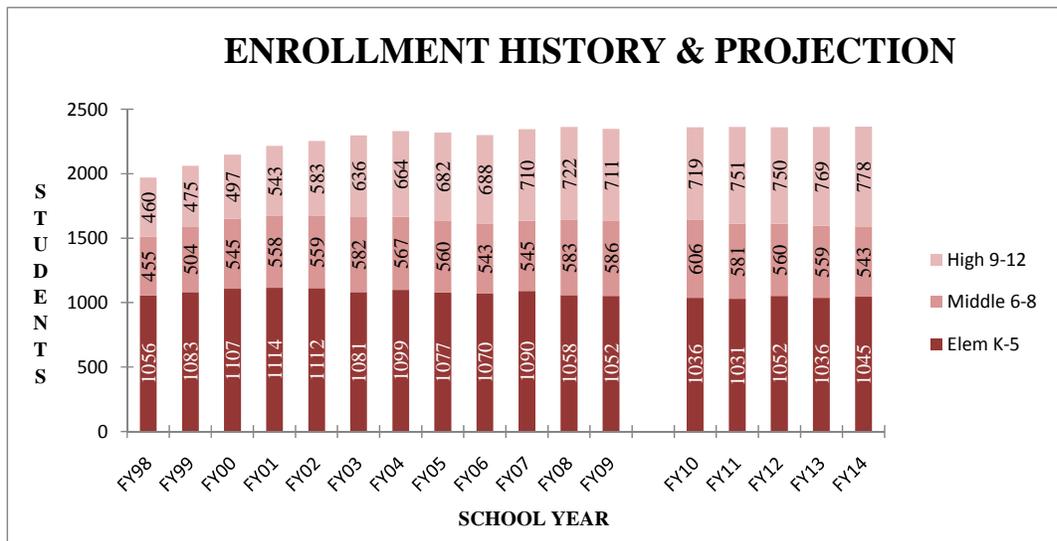
Contractual increases in employee compensation, rising special education costs, and the anticipated level funding of state aid presented a challenge for preparing the school budget. The School Committee worked closely with the school administration to develop a budget that preserves the quality of our core services and incorporates necessary but minimal program improvements.

The School Committee proposes a total budget of \$31,836,141 that is \$1,704,453 or a 5.66% increase over the FY'09 budget. This budget allows us to maintain current programs, meet the class size policy standards, address our mandates in Special Education and No Child Left Behind, and implement some modest improvements in our academic programs.

The factors that have a direct impact on the quality of education in Weston and on the FY'10 Proposed Budget are summarized in the following sections.

Staffing and Enrollment

Our staff is our most important asset and we believe the compensation packages negotiated with each of our bargaining units serve to attract and retain highly qualified professional staff in a very competitive market. However, since staff wages and salaries account for more than 87% of the school budget these compensation packages have a significant impact on our overall budget.



Overall enrollment is nearly flat in FY'10, although the Middle and High Schools will continue to experience increases as the population bulge moves through. We carefully monitor class sizes throughout the system, and the FY'10 budget includes personnel adjustments in response to individual grade fluctuations. This close management of our staffing patterns enables us to educate Weston students as effectively and efficiently as possible and to project our personnel costs. The graph shows the twelve-year school enrollment history and a projection for the next five years. Tables showing our professional staffing are provided on page 8.

Special Education and Other Mandates

School districts are required by federal and state laws to provide a range of special education services beginning at age 3 and ending at age 22. Special Education poses many challenges for school districts, both fiscally and programmatically, especially as the number of students identified with special needs and the severity of those needs are increasing. Services are provided within the classroom in the district whenever possible, or in specialized out-of-district placements for students whose disabilities preclude them from being able to make progress or function in the typical classroom setting.

Total special education spending in FY'10, net of State reimbursements ("circuit breaker"), grant funds and pre-school tuitions, is projected to be \$473,074 or 9.01% over the FY'09 budget. The FY'10 increase is attributable to changes in staffing for our inclusion programs, a Life Skills program at the Middle School, a teacher at the High School, and an increase in out-of-district placements. These changes are designed to meet the needs of our increasing student population in special education. Despite the uncertainty of state aid, the quantity and severity of individual cases, and the lack of control over private placement tuition costs, cost analyses demonstrate that Weston provides effective and efficient special education services for its special needs population, through both our integrated pre-school and our K-12 programs.

Program Support

The School Committee and the Administration have developed a Long Range Plan for the Weston Public Schools. This strategic plan is the basis of annual budget planning and the FY'10 Proposed Budget reflects its priorities.

The High School Program of Studies includes several program changes. These program changes include restructuring English electives, adding Grade 10 Honors English and the continuation of the Mandarin program at the High School.

Middle School population shifts have resulted in an additional Grade 6 section, a reduction to a Grade 7 section and the addition of two Grade 8 sections. Additional course offerings have been added in response to this shift in enrollment.

Enrollment at the elementary level is flat. A full day kindergarten program was implemented in the 2008-2009 school year. A Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) grant offset the costs associated with the additional instructional time. The FY '10 budget includes full day kindergarten, with the expectation of continued support from the state.

Overall, these important educational program improvements amount to 0.40% of the total FY'10 Proposed Budget increase.

Revenue Offsets

The School Committee has actively sought to offset increasing costs in the School Department budget by identifying and leveraging new revenue sources. While grants and the State "circuit breaker" reimbursement are very important, they are also uncertain. Other revenues that the School Committee has been able to generate include fees for use of school facilities by outside groups, tuition payments from non-resident and foreign students, and tuition payments for eligible pre-school students. Like the grants and other State aid, however, these revenues can also fluctuate from year to year.

The schools also benefit from the efforts of such parent groups as The Weston Education Enrichment Fund Committee, Weston Boosters, and the Weston Parent Teacher Organization, which provide substantial support for projects that enrich our students' educational experience. None of these individual or organized contributions are reflected in the budget, but their impact on students' educational experience is significant, especially in this economic climate.

Looking Ahead

The School Committee and School Administration are continuously engaged in planning for the future. NCLB requirements and special education costs pose significant pressures on current and future school budgets, beyond the usual factors of enrollment changes, collective bargaining requirements, utility costs, health insurance volatility and the like. More significant for the coming year are the effects of the general economic situation on the State's ability to fund mandated and legislated programs, and the Town's willingness and ability to support its schools through property taxes.

Although federal economic stimulus funds have been provided to cover a wide range of educational initiatives, Weston only qualifies for special education (I.D.E.A.) funds through a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Final confirmation has not been received from DESE, but we anticipate approximately \$390,000 will be provided to the Town over the next two years. Each school district must write a grant to obtain these funds and report on how the funds are spent. While some detail is still being clarified, it appears that the funds must be spent on new and innovative special education programs, and may not be used to supplant existing expenditures.

In summary, the FY'10 budget reflects our commitment to efficiently meet our strategic plan goals that preserve the quality of education in Weston. We believe that this budget provides the highest quality education to Weston students that our economic environment allows. The achievement of our current students remains outstanding and is reported in the annual Town Report. We are grateful for the support of the taxpayers in this shared goal.

Operating Budget Summary

This table summarizes the school budget as recommended by the School Committee and its estimated impact on the tax rate. Overall expenses (line 1) are partially offset by revenues that the School Committee is allowed to apply directly (line 2), yielding gross operating budget (line 3) submitted for approval by Town Meeting. The Town receives school-related revenue (line 5) that is offset against overall Town expenses in setting the tax rate. The net school budget less school-related outside revenue is a fair measure of net school costs to the taxpayer (line 6). Dividing those gross school costs by the Town's property valuation (line 7) generates an approximation of a school tax rate (line 8).

	2008-09 <u>BUDGET</u>	2009-10 <u>RECOMMENDED</u>	\$ <u>CHANGE</u>	% <u>CHANGE</u>
GROSS EXPENSE ¹	\$28,657,778	\$30,359,695	\$1,701,917	5.94
REVENUE TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE ²	\$1,473,910	\$1,476,446	\$2,536	0.17
GROSS OPERATING BUDGET³	\$30,131,688	\$31,836,141	\$1,704,453	5.66
PER PUPIL BUDGET⁴	\$12,827	\$13,484	\$657	5.12
OPERATING BUDGET REVENUE TO TOWN ⁵	\$2,608,444	\$2,608,444	\$0	0.00
NET EXPENSES TO BE RAISED BY TAXES ⁶	\$27,523,244	\$29,227,697	\$1,704,453	6.19
PROPERTY VALUATION ⁷ (in thousands)	\$5,102,207	\$5,172,263	\$70,056	1.37
ESTIMATED TAX RATE FOR SCHOOL OPERATIONS ⁸	\$5.39	\$5.65	\$0.26	

NOTES:

- (1) Gross School Expenses are detailed in subsequent pages.
- (2) Revenue paid directly to the School Committee includes athletic gate receipts, concert and performance ticket receipts, charges to the Recreation Department, and State funds (\$513,787) for METCO, as well as Pre-School tuitions.
- (3) The Gross Operating Budget is the amount that is the School Department budget.
- (4) The per pupil budget is computed by dividing the gross school budget (line 3) by the enrollment. This excludes amounts appropriated to the Selectmen for school purposes such as insurance, county retirement contributions, debt service, and regional school district membership. This per pupil index differs from that published by the State, which uses a different formula.

- (5) Chapter 70 state aid payable directly to the Town for school purposes in FY'09 is \$2,608,444 and the same amount is currently estimated for FY'10. Chapter 70 aid includes funds related to the Education Reform Act and its mandates.
- (6) This "net expenses to be raised by taxes" item is an approximate one for school operations only and excludes (a) payments of principal and interest on major capital items appropriated by the Town in previous years; and (b) payments to the Minuteman Regional Vocational School. Note that this "net expenses" rises at a rate different from that of the budget, as a result of applying State aid.
- (7) Property valuation for FY'10 has been provided by the Town.
- (8) Actual tax rate determination follows the Assessors' and Selectmen's consideration of all relevant school and municipal finance factors. Since a 1991-92 change in legislation, there is no longer a separate school tax rate.

Program Budget Overview

	APPROVED BUDGET 2008-09	RECOMMENDED BUDGET 2009-10	\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	\$7,312,508	\$7,481,152	\$168,644	2.31
MIDDLE SCHOOL	\$4,644,137	\$5,048,283	\$404,146	8.70
HIGH SCHOOL	\$6,895,182	\$7,164,478	\$269,296	3.91
TECHNOLOGY	\$986,070	\$1,072,522	\$86,452	8.77
SPECIAL EDUCATION	\$4,775,908	\$5,268,446	\$492,538	10.31
FACILITIES	\$3,263,055	\$3,377,320	\$114,265	3.50
TRANSPORTATION	\$980,379	\$989,466	\$9,087	0.93
DISTRICT-WIDE	\$1,274,449	\$1,434,474	\$160,025	12.56
TOTAL PROPOSED BUDGET:	\$30,131,688	\$31,836,141	\$1,704,453	5.66

Behind The Budget

Enrollments

The elementary enrollment increase first experienced in 1990-91 has leveled off and is projected to decrease somewhat in the next few years. Enrollment at the Middle and High School grades will fluctuate as the larger cohorts move up through the system. Refer to the chart on page 2.

Elementary Class Size

In 1972 the School Committee adopted class size standards for grades K-8 with minimum, desirable, and maximum values. In 2005 the School Committee engaged in a year-long process to evaluate the existing policy and to recommend changes if appropriate. The result of that process was the adoption of class size standards beginning in the 2006-2007 school year. These standards provide a class size range as well as a target size for classes at each of the elementary grade levels K-5. A four-year history and next year's projected homeroom size averages are cited below.

Grade	New Policy Standards		Pupils Per Class (Avg.)				Projected 2009-10
	Range	Target	Actual 2005-06	Actual 2006-07	Actual 2007-08	Actual 2008-09	
K	17-21	19	19.7	19.0	17.6	19.4	19.5
1	17-21	19	19.4	18.3	20.3	19.5	20.5
2	18-22	20	20.8	20.0	18.9	20.9	20.5
3	18-22	20	20.3	22.2	21.2	20.4	21.8
4	20-24	22	20.6	22.6	22.7	21.0	20.5
5	20-24	22	22.6	21.2	20.9	20.1	21.3

Student- Professional Staff Ratios

School budgets are determined by two factors more than by any others: the number of staff employed and the amount they are paid. One measure we have used over the years is student-staff ratio. This measure is achieved by dividing the number of students in a unit by the total number of staff assigned to them. "Staff" includes classroom and Special Education inclusion teachers, administrators, counselors, librarians, specialists: all professionals assigned to the group of students in question. A four-year history and a projection for next year are as follows:

	Actual 2005-06	Actual 2006-07	Actual 2007-08	Actual 2008-09	Projected 2009-10
Elementary (K-5)	12.1	12.3	12.1	11.9	12.0
Middle School (6-8)	10.0	10.2	10.5	10.2	9.9
Senior High (9-12)	<u>9.6</u>	<u>9.7</u>	<u>9.7</u>	<u>9.3</u>	<u>9.2</u>
System-wide*	10.4	10.6	10.6	10.6	10.5

*Includes central office administrators, school psychologists, METCO staff but excludes Pre-School.

Professional Staff Changes

	<u>Actual</u> <u>2008-09</u>	<u>Projected</u> <u>2009-10</u>		<u>Actual</u> <u>2008-09</u>	<u>Projected</u> <u>2009-10</u>
ELEMENTARY			HIGH SCHOOL		
Regular Classroom Teachers	50.80	48.80	Regular Classroom Teachers	61.53	61.78
Spec. Ed. / ESL Teachers ¹	11.10	11.10	Spec. Ed. / ESL Teachers ¹	3.65	4.65
Special Subject Teachers ²	17.32	16.86	Guidance Counselors	4.00	4.00
Guidance Counselors	3.00	3.00	Librarian	1.00	1.00
Librarian	3.00	3.00	Supervisors ³	3.20	3.20
Supervisors ³	0.40	0.40	Technology	1.00	1.00
Administrators	<u>3.00</u>	<u>3.00</u>	Administrators	<u>2.00</u>	<u>2.00</u>
Totals	88.62	86.16	Totals	76.38	77.63
MIDDLE SCHOOL			SYSTEMWIDE		
Regular Classroom Teachers	44.63	47.73	Superintendent's Office,		
Spec. Ed. / ESL Teachers ¹	3.15	4.25	Business and Curriculum	3.00	3.00
Guidance Counselors	3.00	3.00	Spec. Education & Other	9.50	10.50
Librarian	1.00	1.00	State & Federal Grants	<u>12.74</u>	<u>11.82</u>
Supervisors ³	2.45	2.45	Totals	25.24	25.32
Technology	1.00	1.00			
Administrators	<u>2.00</u>	<u>2.00</u>			
Totals	57.23	61.43	GRAND TOTAL	247.47	250.54

NOTES:

- (1) Teachers of students with special needs and ESL
- (2) Teachers of art, music, physical education, reading, world languages, science and math

- (3) Includes supervisory portions of Directors, Department Heads, and House Leaders

Other Professional and Support Staff Changes

	<u>Actual</u> <u>2008-09</u>	<u>Projected</u> <u>2009-10</u>
Building & Grounds	31.9	31.9
Human Resources	1.0	1.0
Nurses	4.6	4.5
OT/PT	3.8	3.8
Paraprofessional/Tech Support/Instr. Aides	29.3	28.6
Secretarial Aides	23.0	23.0
Secretaries	18.7	18.7
Transportation	23.0	23.0
Tutors/Literacy Assistants	<u>60.3</u>	<u>64.0</u>
	195.6	198.5

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