



Baseline School Budget Pledge

Sign the pledge at tinyurl.com/BEJApledge

We the following parents, students, teachers and community members have come together to pledge our support for a new way of creating Boston Public School budgets that is equitable and healthy.

Each year, budget season means that when one school has an increase, another experiences a budget cut; where some students receive a great education, some students don't. The weighted student funding formula, the lack of charter school reimbursements, and gentrification have taken their toll on school budgets. Choices such as whether a school has a social worker or a science teacher, whether to have toilet paper or writing paper in schools are unfortunate decisions that no one should have to make.

The budget must keep the promises that are made for a quality education, regardless of small or large schools or changes in enrollment.

The current FY20 BPS budget does not provide a foundation for every school to provide its students with an excellent education. In a city and state as wealthy as ours, we refuse to accept that this is the best we can do. We need fully funded schools. In addition to equity-based allocation of funding for students with high needs, we need to guarantee a baseline quality of education for every school, classroom, and child. We pledge to support one another in our search for equity by demanding a baseline budget that covers the following at every BPS school:

Curriculum

- 1) Curriculum that is racially/culturally responsive with a student and community centered learning process.
- 2) Arts programs, music, technology, and sports or recess at every school.
- 3) More time for recess and creative activities, and, where possible, green space so children can play outside.
- 4) Science and technology classes to prepare every student for the 21st century future.
- 5) More dual language schools and highly qualified ESL teachers to support all English Learners.
- 6) Alternatives to suspension including restorative justice, and an anti-bullying curriculum across the district.
- 7) Opportunities for enriching and fun field trips for every child.
- 8) Quality before and after-school programming at all schools.

Facilities

- 9) Clean, up-to-date facilities with regular maintenance, and more safety in hallways and classrooms.
- 10) Clean bathrooms, with enough soap and toilet paper to go around.
- 11) Healthy, yummy food, tap water that is safe for drinking, and enough time for students to eat.
- 12) Guaranteed transportation for students who need it and bus monitors to keep them safe.

Staffing/Family Supports

- 13) Guidance counselors, a nurse, special education, and enough social emotional support to meet every student's needs.
- 14) Full staffing for inclusion classrooms, including but not limited to two teachers and a para, with enough funding to allow for differentiated instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.
- 15) A comprehensive parent engagement plan with welcoming school practices and fully functioning parent councils that shift the culture in the district to value parent leadership.
- 16) A full-time parent engagement coordinator at each school to focus on creating a healthy parent and school site council at each school.
- 17) Support for teachers to allow them a manageable workload, sufficient supplies, and professional development.
- 18) More principals/headmasters and teachers of color.
- 19) Principals/headmasters who are effective, good listeners, communicative, collaborative, supportive of shared leadership, long-lasting and representative of our students cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- 20) A Hub Schools coordinator at every school whose role is to connect wraparound supports and community resources with the students and their families.
- 21) _____

*Note: the items in italics are ones that Superintendent Cassellius has said she agrees with at community meetings.

Terminology/Acronyms-

ELL- English Language Learners

Hub Schools- a process in which a school community determines needs and partners to meet family needs

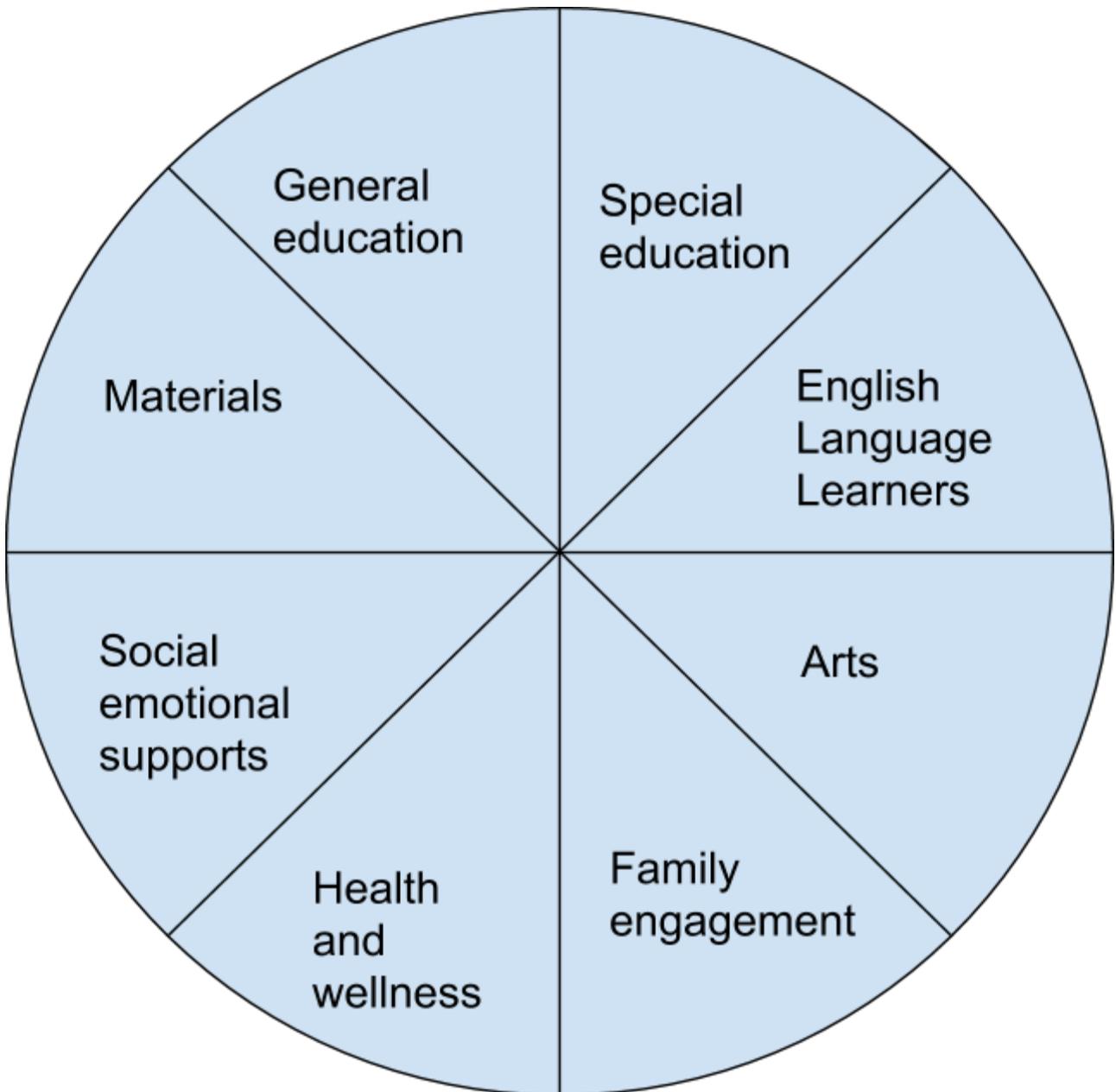
Family Engagement Coordinator- BPS staff person who works with families in a school

Parent Council- Body where parents can address school/student needs; Every parent is a member of the Parent Council

School Site Council- School body that represents parents and teachers to address school/student needs. SSCs review and sign off on school budgets



Paper Plate Activity





How to: Presenting the Pledge to Parent Council or School Site Council

Use these steps as a “mini-lesson” guide to build relationships and shared power at Parent Council or School Site Council. The key takeaway is that we need a foundational budget that provides an excellent education at every school, and that schools shouldn’t be forced to choose between essential programs.

Paper Plate Activity:

- 1) Divide the room into groups of three (if SSC, mix up parents and teachers), and give each group a copy of the Pie Plate. Give each group 5 “pie slice” triangles (cut out of paper ahead of time) and tell them that’s their budget. Keep several pie slices in your hand (this is important for later). Let them struggle to decide what to fund. Ask: What did you cut and why? How will this affect your school?
- 2) Now tell the groups that can compete with each other and take each other’s pie slices. They can challenge one another to Rock, Paper, Scissors and if they win, they get to steal a slice. Let them compete for a few minutes, until pie slices are inequitably distributed. Ask: How did it feel to compete with one another? Is this fair?
- 3) Show the room the pie slices you kept to yourself and point out that no one challenged you to Rock, Paper, Scissors. Draw the parallel between this, and the fact that we live in an extremely wealthy city and state. We’re so busy competing with each other over funding (some schools win and some schools lose), that we don’t challenge the funding system.

Presenting the Pledge

- 1) Ask: what are some things that all quality schools should have? Collect answers.
- 2) For years now, the budget has been based on dividing the pot of money up between schools. The School Committee and Superintendent have not put forward a vision for what a quality school looks like. Each school competes for funding, and then has to make tough choices. We need our leaders to put forward a vision of quality education, and then fund it.
- 3) The Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA), a coalition of parents, educators, and community members, has put together a Baseline Budget Pledge for schools to show their support for a baseline quality of education and funding at every school.
- 4) Read the Pledge together. Point out that some of their suggestions are in it. Ask if people want to add anything in the blank. Ask if they’d like to sign on as a Council.
- 5) Collect names and emails of people who want to join the campaign. Visit tinyurl.com/BEJApledge and sign as a Council!



Using the Pledge to Build Power with Parents

Educators and parents share a vision for quality education for every child. By focusing on our common ground, we can build strong relationships and advocate for the schools our students deserve. Use the Baseline School Quality Pledge as a tool to facilitate conversations with parents. Some guidelines for having these conversations:

Get in the Door: Introduce yourself and explain why you want to talk.

Ex: I know many parents are concerned about the lack of X at our school and I would love to talk with you about it.

Get the Story: Most of the conversation should be dedicated to asking probing questions to learn about what the other person cares about, what motivates them, and what concerns them.

LISTEN!

Ex: What aspects of our school make you proud to send your child here? Are there things the school is missing? What do you wish we had to provide the highest possible quality education for our students?

Share a Vision for Moving Forward: This is your opportunity to share your own personal story so that the conversation becomes a two-way exchange. Make connections between what you heard and your own motivations for being involved. Ask questions to help the other person imagine what is possible when we build power together.

Ex: In a city as wealthy as ours, I refuse to accept that our current school budget is the best we can do. We need fully funded schools and that's why I've signed on to this pledge. If parents and educators sign on together what kind of message do you think that would send? What other steps can we take together?

Get a Commitment: Oftentimes, a successful one-on-one meeting ends with the other person making a commitment.

Ex: Will you sign on to the pledge? Can we present this pledge together at the next Parent Council meeting?