



Planning for FY20 Grade 5 Pilot and 5/6 Alternative Program

To: School Committee Members
From: Jeannine M. Durkin, Acting Superintendent
Date: April 1, 2019

During the FY19 budget presentations, the School Committee voted to approve a grade 5 pilot that included grade 4 students remaining at the Reilly and the Moody Schools for grade 5 and eliminated grade 5 classes from the Sullivan. In addition, the proposal closed the Cardinal O'Connell Alternative Program and included a plan for the Sullivan to add two alternative classrooms and a Coordinator to oversee those classrooms. The plan for the BRIDGE Program was to add 10 additional slots to accommodate grade 7 and 8 students with classrooms eliminated from the Cardinal. This plan also eliminated one strand from each grade level at the Reilly School in order to accommodate the grade 5 classrooms. It also eliminated the Pre-K and K+ classes at the Moody and added an Early Childhood Center at the Cardinal O'Connell School.

This school year due to budget constraints, the alternative classrooms were not created at the Sullivan, expansion of the BRIDGE Program did not occur and the Coordinator and Case manager were not hired to support the Alternative Programs.

Looking forward to the FY20 school year, the following steps have been taken to date:

We assessed our ability to expand the grade 5 model to all schools for FY20. This included:

- Convening a series of meetings with members of the Superintendent's Leadership Team, the Coordinator of the Family Resource Center, the Assistant Business Manager for Transportation and the Facilities Director to review district-wide student enrollment data and assess space availability in our schools.
- Convening meetings in the fall with City Officials including the Chief Financial Officer, Purchasing Manager, and the Deputy Director of the Department of Planning and Development to ascertain the feasibility of securing viable space in Lowell for the addition of a new middle school including consideration of the following options:
 - Review of available city owned buildings for potential renovation.
 - Discussion of timeline for submission of an RFP for a building that meets the District's needs for a four (4) strand middle school (including whether or not it would be a purchase or lease).
 - Confirmed Freshman Academy Plan for High School Building Project.
 - Reviewed other school building space/capacity.
- Hosting a meeting with City Officials to develop an RFP for suitable space for a new middle school for the FY21 school year, which could begin to afford us more options for the upcoming

years for the grades K-5 expansion plan as well as alleviate the overcrowding at the STEM Academy.

- Reviewing program equity for current grade 5 students housed at the Reilly and Moody Schools relative to instructional time, allied arts, intramurals, and schedule of report cards. It is important to note that the pilot also didn't account for the Lincoln School grade 4 students who normally would go to the Sullivan for grade 5 thus causing larger class sizes in grade 5 at other middle schools. This especially impacted the Butler School grade 5 classes this year, which lead to a discussion about needing to add an additional strand at each grade level making it a 6 strand school.

It is with this review in mind along with the pending budgetary constraints for FY20 school year that the team could not recommend the grade 5 pilot continuing in FY20. Equity could not be guaranteed across all grade 5 classes district-wide and adding all grade 5 classes to elementary schools was not feasible for the next school year given our current building capacity. In accordance with this recommendation, the following has occurred to date:

- Meetings have been held with all Principals from impacted schools as well as sharing of information with all Principals district-wide for feedback.
- The UTL was consulted with regarding staff that were relocated/impacted given this one year pilot.
- The Superintendent offered to meet with all staff that may be impacted by these potential moves.
- The Superintendent offered to meet with all parents who may be impacted by these potential moves. At the Principals' request, the meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2019 as part of a regularly scheduled School Site Council Meeting.
- Meetings have been held with the Principal of the BRIDGE Program to discuss revisiting the FY19 plan to add additional slots for students for FY20. The proposed plan would add 10 additional slots to include grade 6 students at the BRIDGE. The proposal also requires building one wall in a current large space at the BRIDGE to create an additional classroom, moving a bell and phone from that space, and hiring one additional teacher (STEM Resource Teacher) and a Case Manager. Our Facilities Director has already communicated with the DPW about the wall being constructed prior to the opening of school in August 2019. The Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment and Curriculum Coordinators will work with the staff at the BRIDGE including the Literacy Specialist to align curriculum and provide professional development to accommodate grade 6 students.
- Meetings continue relative to supports/programming for grade 5 students who require alternative options should the need arise throughout the school year.
- A meeting is scheduled with the UTL and the Principal of the STEM Academy to discuss addressing the grade 5 students who are currently on the elementary schedule.
- A team will be established to begin the work of developing a multi-year plan to address school capacity concerns and draft recommendations for a district-wide K-5 model.

We respectfully request that the School Committee consider this plan as we prepare our FY20 budget.