

## **Appendix 3 FY'21 Proposed Additional Personnel**

### **Justification for Budget Requests: Student Services**

In keeping with the following Blueprint for Continuous Student Improvement, the following budget requests are presented for consideration.

- **Cultivate Well-Being of All:** We will ensure student, faculty, and staff well-being by teaching strategies, skills, and competencies necessary to maintain and support social-emotional health.
- **Promote Academic Excellence:** We will improve achievement for all students by providing individualized, equitable, and challenging opportunities in an environment that fosters growth and skill acquisition for each student.
- **Engage Students, Families and Community as Partners in Learning:** We will continuously model a district environment based on collaboration, respect, and open lines of communication through partnerships with students, caregivers, community members, businesses, community-based organizations, and educational institutions.
- **Champion Educator Excellence:** We will attract, develop, and retain highly qualified

Budget Requests:

#### **Warren:**

**Dually Certified Teacher Stipend and ESP support** is being requested due to the high numbers of students known to the district and moving up from Pittaway who have significant learning profiles and are showing success in a dually certified preschool classroom. These students will not be able to be successful as learners in a general education setting even with push in or pull out support, nor should they be artificially placed in more restrictive setting as a result (for example placed into the RISE program for students with significant developmental needs). This is tied directly into the promotion of academic excellence and the cultivation of student well-being (not to mention staff wellbeing, as students placed inappropriately in settings are a stress to staff, families and students). To note, there are 14 current Pittaway four year olds who qualify for placement and three more students are currently in evaluation. Of these students, only 4-5 should be considered for the RISE program, and the others should be in a dually certified model, as they currently are succeeding in such a model at Pittaway. Finally, Warren cannot readjust the dually certified rooms they currently have to spread them out as the number of DC rooms needed in grades one and two continue to be needed based on current numbers of students in kindergarten and grade one who will need a DC room to support their academic growth and well-being.

**.5 School Psychologist** is being requested to support the Learning Center Therapeutic Classroom that currently supports four students with their intensive therapeutic needs. Our current psychologist at Warren is unable to do her job of assessing all students who require assessment, counseling those students with identified need, attending to crisis and behavioral dysregulation AND provide daily therapeutic support to those children in the therapeutic classroom. This year alone we lost one student to out of district placement because we could not add him into the therapeutic classroom and we have another who should be placed there but cannot. Next year

we have one student moving up from Pittaway who is best supported in this highly specialized program and no student moving up to Mindess from the classroom. Students needing this level of support cannot achieve academically if their mental health needs are not addressed and their overall wellbeing and development of SEL skills is greatly compromised. (Note: I propose this position be added to the .5 FTE School Psychologist position for Mindess, thereby reducing the potential additional compensation cost of benefits to only one person, not two).

**Special Education Teacher** is being requested to support students who have unique academic learning needs which can best be represented as low average or borderline cognitive skills, language based deficits who fall between the RISE (developmental) and REACH (language based classroom) programs. These students need intensive reading remediation and instruction that is beyond the title I literacy support (systemic, explicit, research based reading instruction-such as OG, Wilson, Sonday etc). Grade 3 MCAS scores have shown a consistent trend of low reading scores and while we are underway in a multiyear initiative to improve ELA instruction using Lucy Calkins we still must support this group of unique learners. This level of support would allow for academic achievement for students who otherwise are having great difficulty learning fundamental reading skills. We know at Pittaway there are at least two students who show the signs for significant reading disability and at Warren currently we have at least two struggling readers who should move into our language based REACH program which is full at this time. Further, getting the intensive support would be promoting a greater self-confidence as a learner and overall feeling of well-being.

**Four ABA Paraprofessionals** are being requested to support students in the RISE program. We have been designing a program that reduces aba support for students as they move from Pittaway to Warren and we have now realized this is not effective for student learning or social emotional well-being. Shared support for many if not most is not allowing them to learn necessary skills for behavior regulation and academic achievement because when one student in a shared support situation has a dysregulated moment, all the adult attention is taken from the other student. This year we saw how that impacts students moving onto Mindess in that they haven't progressed in their independent skills and still require intensive adult support. There are five students at Pittaway who are moving up to the RISE program all of whom need intensive aba support and only three who are moving from Warren to Mindess (and these three all have shared support). Thus not only is the RISE program currently understaffed, but it will be more significantly understaffed next year. Finally there are students who are not in the RISE program who also need aba paraprofessional support although to a lesser extent. This also factors into the resource allocation of the aba staff. This request directly ties into achieving academic excellence and secondly the cultivation of well-being for all.

#### **Mindess:**

**Increase OT FTE from .5 to .8** is being requested because of the overall volume of OT assessments and services which are present at Mindess, AMS and AHS (please note that this position serves these three buildings). Currently there are 51 students at Mindess receiving OT services and 19 more at AMS and AHS combined. Overall, in the district there are 128 students receiving OT services. This year we have had to add extra hours to the part time OT for two straight months in order for her to complete assessments within the required timeline compliance. Increasing the OT FTE will allow the district to be not only in compliance with testing timelines but also service delivery to students across three buildings which in turn supports academic achievement and behavioral regulation (a major focus for OT is sensory strategies for students) which is part of SEL

**.5 School Psychologist** is being requested to support the Learning Center Therapeutic Classroom that currently supports five students with their intensive therapeutic needs. Our current psychologist at Mindess is unable to do his job of assessing all students who require assessment, counseling those students with identified need, attending to crisis and behavioral dysregulation AND provide daily therapeutic support to those children in the therapeutic classroom. This year one student is going out of district because we could not appropriately contain his dysregulated behaviors and address his social emotional needs. Students needing this level of support cannot achieve academically if their mental health needs are not addressed and their overall wellbeing and development of SEL skills is greatly compromised. (Note: I propose this position be added to the .5 FTE School Psychologist position for Warren, thereby reducing the potential additional compensation cost of benefits to only one person, not two).

**Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)** is being requested to support all students in Mindess but especially those students who have developmental needs (are on the spectrum). The specialized programs at Mindess support students who are the most intensive and many have significant dysregulation. A BCBA will be able to not only provide oversight of the work of the ABA paraprofessionals but also ensure that students are receiving the needed aba services which include discrete trial training, inclusion of aba strategies in all environments, video modeling, specific behavioral intervention plans, etc. This ties directly into the promotion of academic excellence and the cultivation of wellbeing for all. Our current BCBA covers three buildings and is not able to provide the oversight of the aba paras, data analysis and assessments that are needed for our growing population of students on the spectrum or who have intensive behavioral dysregulation and sensory needs.

**Special Education Teacher** is being requested to support the increase number of student assigned to the specialized programs, especially those students with borderline cognitive skills, and language based learning needs. Our current specialized programs for these students are maxed out and the quality of services is compromised. We are seeing a continuing trend of students having significant language based learning needs, putting at risk their capacity to learn basic reading and writing skills which are foundational to academic success. Further, addressing their foundational literacy skills will have a positive impact on their well-being and self-concept as a learner.

**ABA Paraprofessional/ESP** is being requested to support students who need aba support both those in the specialized program, but also in inclusion classes with support. We have three students needing aba support moving up from Warren and only one student leaving the specialized program to go to AMS. This request ties into academic achievement and social well-being.

#### **Ashland Middle School:**

**.5 FTE School Psychologist** is being requested to support the specialized program The Learning Center which currently is supported halftime by a psychologist. This is not enough, as the emotional needs of the students in this program are not only daily, but also minute to minute. At least two students currently are at risk for out of district placements due to their emotional and behavioral needs. In meeting the needs of these students currently, administration and the guidance department staff are pulled from their assignments on a regular basis making it impossible to meet the needs they would typically address throughout the school (such as staff observations, teaching Second Step or SEL lessons, etc). The request clearly ties directly into the academic achievement of those assigned to the Learning Center and their well-being overall. However, there is also an indirect impact on promoting educator excellence in that the administration is better able to provide their oversight to the teaching team without interruption. (Note: I am recommending this request be paired with a .5 FTE increase for a school psychologist at AHS, thus representing only one benefits cost).

**Special Education Teacher** is being requested to support the students with significant language based needs and reading deficits. Our current specialized program for this profile is maxed out and as a result we are not able to have the teacher be in front of all students in need, rather her teaching assistants are also directly instructing students from lessons provided by the teacher. While acceptable, it does not represent best practice. Further, last year we were cited on inappropriate ratios of student to staff due to the need to at times reallocate ESPs to cover other needs. This request attaches to our core value of academic excellence as well as the overall wellbeing for those students with significant language based needs or reading deficits.

**AHS:**

**Educational Support Personnel** is requested to support a student moving up from AMS and in need of support both in the specialized classroom but any inclusion opportunities at AHS. The current ESPs at AHS are all assigned and there is no thought they will not be fully utilized next year. A staff from AMS cannot move up with this student as the incoming students from Mindess will need the current level of ESP support already in place. This requests attaches to both academic achievement and overall well-being.

**.5 FTE School Psychologist (inadvertently left off the budget requests, but paired with the AMS school psychologist FTE increase request)** is being requested to support the high school Learning Center on a daily and moment by moment basis. Currently we experience times when a student attached to this social emotional program is unable to access therapeutic support because the psychologist is at the middle school and the teaching staff are all working with other students in inclusion classes, or actively teaching groups. The overall therapeutic need of our students is increasing. This addresses the overall well-being of our vulnerable students as well as supporting their ability to achieve academically.