SCHOOL COMMITTEE FY 25 BUDGET QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SHEET

Please write your budget questions below by Feb. 26, 2024 for answers to be provided by March 4, 2024.

No question is "too big" or "too small". Just write your questions below the line and members of the Gorham Schools District Leadership Team will make sure to provide direct responses to help answer questions. This will allow the School Committee to make the most informed decisions possible when attempting to balance the needs of the school department with the overall needs of our community.

Thank you for all that you do for our community! Here we go!

- Questions added after 3/4/24
- Questions added after 3/11/24
- Questions added after 3/18/24

Miscellaneous:

1. **Question:** Can you provide more detail regarding the changes to the Town MOU for Technology shared services resulting in +$70,000.00 cost to the School Department? Is this negotiable with the Town? Why the change?

   Answer: To be clear, the change in the MOU with the town for Technology services is going to ADD $30,000.00 to the school's budget. Not sure where the $70,000.00 figure comes from that is in the question???

   In regards to what is happening, the request for the change in the MOU was made by the Town Manager in alignment with our annual MOU that allows adjustments to be made in our shared services agreements by March of each year.

   In this case, the Town Manager reached out earlier this winter to express his desire to separate shared services with the School and instead seek to hire a 2nd technology technician for the town that will be placed in the Town's budget. Our original MOU was for $40,000.00 per year and is being lowered to approximately $10,000.00 per year based on most recent conversations. The $ "saved" by the town will go towards adding a new technology position in their budget. We will still have to have sufficient coverage for our needs so we cannot reduce the costs this was offsetting on the school's side. Therefore, the school will need to pick up the difference in the loss of the shared service MOU with the town, causing our costs to go up by the $30,000.00 difference.

We will still maintain an MOU with the Town for technology services for maintenance of our phone services which cannot be separated due to configurations and overall costs.

2. **Question:** Is it certain that the Aspire Grant and ELO grant funding is ending at the end of FY 24 (June 30, 2024)?

   Answer: YES. The Aspire Grant was already extended by one year last year. The ELO grant expenditure timelines are being extended to FY 26, but there is NO ADDITIONAL MONEY being added. Without additional funding being added, a timeline extension does us no good because we have already expended the funds as we were originally supposed to - mostly in the form of payment for the full time ELO instructor position at GHS. Long story short - there is no additional funding to maintain these important aspects of our work so we must find a way to EITHER place these costs in our general fund budget, or reduce staff, which will result in a loss of programming.

3. **Question:** Village Crossing Guard ($20k) – Is this at the entrance intersection? Have we had robust volunteers at the other spot where a crossing guard was eliminated near Baxter? Is it realistic that we will have volunteers? Do we have cameras that extend that far for safety and monitoring purposes?

   Answer: Yes this is the crossing guard that is currently placed at the Village School Entrance intersection. We have had NO crossing guards at the location by Baxter, and no volunteers to perform this service. We MAY have slightly better luck with volunteers at the Village Elementary School site, but I am doubtful that we would be able to provide full services at this location each and every day. We would need to lean heavily on drivers paying attention and driving safely (in other words, following the rules) as well as parents walking with children and/or children walking in larger groups together as a way to mitigate safety concerns. We currently do not have camera coverage that would extend that far for safety monitoring purposes.

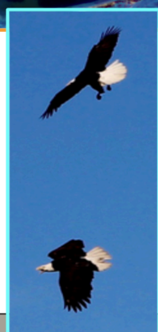
4. **Question:** Summer Curriculum work ($60k) – What is the impact of this change, does this work just shift into the school year?

   Answer: Summer Curriculum Work was added to the local Budget Process beginning with in the Summer of 2016. On a yearly basis, this afforded staff members a chance to engage in individual or small team work projects that were different from the more 'directed' professional development or training aspects needed during the course of the normal school year. This offered a chance for totally differentiated offerings to meet individual staff members' professional learning needs. Normally, between $50,000 and $55,000 was allocated for this purpose. It was divided up by proposals and allocated to go as far as possible in allowing folks to engage in their own professional learning.

   The types of projects engaged in from the Summers of 2021 and 2022 are listed below:

Summer 2021 Projects!!

131 Participants / 1087 Hours



- GMS Social Studies
- 9-12 Executive Functioning
- Writing K-5 Standards Based Expectations
- D.E.I. Colonial America Unit Implementation
- 21st century skills/greencare
- SEL Topical Data Points
- Dual Enrollment A&P Curr. Development
- Condensed curriculum
- Picture a scientist, mathematician, artist
- American Studies Interdisciplinary Curriculum
- Geometry & Algebra 2 Real World Topics
- Diverse Literature Grade 6 ELA
- REVEAL Math digital lessons
- Restorative Practices Trainings 1&2
- SpEd ExFx and S/E Interdisciplinary Approach
- Elementary Art Studio Habits of Mind
- SpED Process/Protocols
- GHS Equity Data Analysis
- Holistic Programming - Alternative Learners
- Wellness Opportunities @ GHS
- Student Self Assessments
- Social Skills Intervention Differentiation
- Financial Algebra
- English 9 & Vocabulary Curriculum
- English 11
- English 12A & 12 Redesign
- Gorham Action Team for Youth Efficacy
- Executive Function Committee
- Trauma Informed Classroom Practices
- Gorham BackPack Program
- Green Care Philosophy & Practices
- Music Curriculum Alignment
- Math REVEAL program
- Marginalized Peoples in History
- Special ED Planning
- Open Studio: Choice and Voice
- Elementary Social Work Referral
- Reveal Math 1st Grade Interactive Lessons
- New Student Welcome
- Rubrics & assessment alignment
- Music Lessons to Guide Instruction
- 21st Century Learners Dresscode Adaptation
- Trauma Informed
- Educational Practices for Alternative Learners
- Wellness Opportunities @ GHS

Summer 2022 Projects!!

47 Projects /146 Participants / 1425 Hours

- RTI Structuring/Preparing
- Integrated Hamilton Unit
- Growth and Development Curriculum Development
- AP CALCULUS / CALCULUS (Dual Enrollment Development & Project/private sector and career alignment and course development
- Alignment for English 11A work
- Alignment for English 12
- GMS DEI Survey Analysis
- Student-Centered Science Journals
- Creating Student Play-along Instrumental Videos
- Algebra Modeling Course Design
- DEI reflection and refinement of 5th grade social studies lesson plans & assessment (Civil War & Westward Expansion)
- American Literature Advanced Curriculum Development
- Reviewing the student/athlete code of conduct
- Interdisciplinary American Studies Curriculum
- Revising the Local Credentialing Professional Handbook
- English 9 summer curriculum work
- GMS DEI Book Club Preparation
- Implementation of SchoolWide SEL (CASEL)
- Reveal Math Unit Tests and Cover Sheet Revision
- DEI Committee Planning for 2022-2023
- DEI Advisory Activities
- Connecting Computer Science to the Community
- CSI Forensics
- Math Task Cards
- New English Electives
- Revitalizing Student Supports Space
- Circle Up! K-5 Classroom Book Group
- Project Based Learning Academy
- GMS Art Curriculum Change
- Writing for Success
- GMS Unifying Steps: Student Leadership
- Disparities in Representation
- English 11 Curriculum Review
- Supporting Social Emotional Needs of Students through Grief Work
- Summer Lessons Grade 5 - 12 to Guide Instruction 2022-23
- Middle School Physical Education assessment and curriculum work
- Curriculum & Assessment Follow up from Summer work
- Alternative Education Program Evaluation
- BackPack Program
- Planning for the Upcoming Year (i.e. schedules, sub plans/ideas for short staffing, transition plans, data collection)
- Civil Rights Team Survey Data Analysis
- Elementary Art focus on DEI and SEL
- Classroom Approaches to Executive Functioning & SEL
- Supporting Individualized Needs of Alt. Ed. Learners
- Transitional Learning with Disengaged Learners
- Great Falls Good Morning Club (formalized morning check in program)
- Improve Instruction & Assessment Practice - Spanish 1-4

Last year, this was cut from the budget and it is not in the FY25 Budget going forward.

The impacts are that staff members will not be paid for individualized professional learning endeavors during the summer. This means some levels of preparation for new courses to be taught, as well as team planning work, will need to occur on their own time without pay. Some of the work could be designated into the work of our coming school year, as building administrators are taking a more indiivudalized and differentiated approach to meet more closely the needs of of their staff and their comprehensive school plans. Many buildings also offer optional staff meetings with professional learning time that could absorb some of this work.

5. **Question:** We've had a handful years where our projections were close (20 or less off) but mostly it's bigger differences. Is this common or any thoughts to improve how projection is done?

   Answer: Enrollment projections is an inexact science at best. In 2016 we moved away from a previous company because they were routinely 75+ students off each year while we were going through our last big growth spirt. For example between the years of 2011 - 2016 the average number of students "off" was 53 students with a range of 21 off in one year and 84 off in another.

   Although our projections have not been exact each year, they are pretty solid, only being off by 20-30 students across all grade levels when we remove the "outliers". When I say "outliers, I mean the one year of COVID when we had almost 100 student difference due to some families deciding to take other options vs. hybrid when we re-opened schools and then this past year when our last projections were off by over 100 students because we did not include the addition of the Pre K program.

   Given the mobile nature of students and families, especially since the Pandemic this 20-30 student difference is not unheard of, especially when keeping in mind the inexact nature of these types of studies. Overall, I find the NESDEC enrollment studies to be relatively reliable and certainly better than the previous company we had used. If the School Committee would like me to seek other proposals, we can certainly move in this direction.

6. **Question:** I noticed no (few?) Substitute lines have been increased for FY25. This is interesting, given that I've heard and seen as high as 8-10 staff out per day at each school. Where are we pacing for this budget line for FY24? Can we consider incentives, such as PTO cash out, to recover some of this cost and reduce absence? Can we consider the cost/benefit of full time subs?

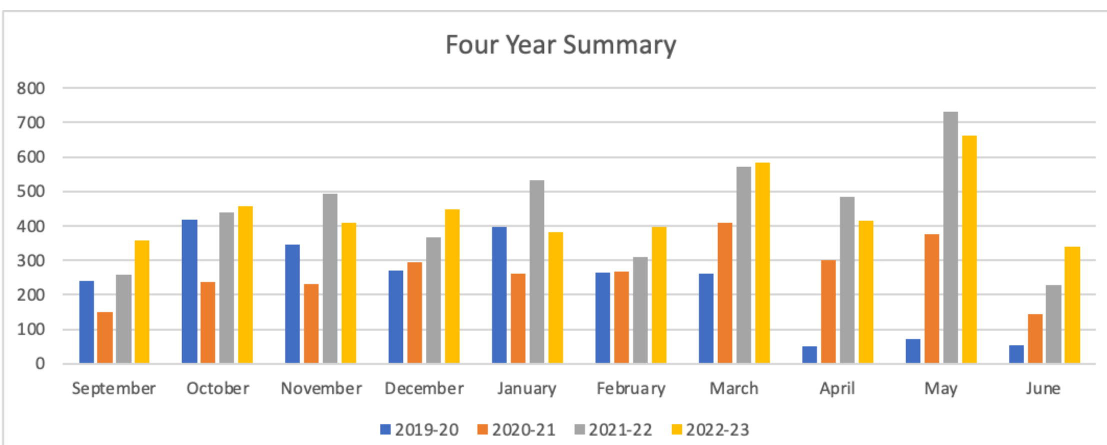
   Answer: We have been monitoring substitute costs closely this year and reporting them monthly to the finance committee. The most recent report can be seen by CLICKING HERE. We have had full time subs in the past during the pandemic. We used ARF funds to pay for these positions, which have since been removed as the ARF funds dried up. The cost for 5 full time subs would be $225,000.00. I'm not sure what you are referring to for PTO cash out - but I think you are referring to offering direct monetary compensation to staff who do not use sick/personal time. We have tried this in the past and it was ineffective. We could certainly look to try it again and perhaps consider different monetary amounts. We have not heard from staff that this would be effective.

7. **Question:** Could we look at the Substitute expenses all together? I noticed we have lines in each school budget and also in special education, it would be helpful to see a total number budgeted and a total number spent for FY24.

   Answer: The report showing substitute accounts together is linked on page 102 of the digital budget book. For ease of reference, it is also linked here: Substitutes

8. **Question**: The concerns/questions I have are three-fold. First, the amount of staff absences. Are staff absences increasing and for what reasons? Are the absences due to morale issues that could be addressed? Do we need to increase staff wellness $$$ or add other incentives?

   Answer: I have conducted a four year staff absence analysis. You can view the full analysis by CLICKING HERE. Basically, what we are seeing is an overall slowing/stabilization of teacher/ed. Tech. absences and an overall increase in fill rates. I have NOT yet completed data for the first half of this year.



Total Absences By Month	2019-20	Fill Rate	2020-21	Fill Rate	2021-22	Fill Rate	2022-23	Fill Rate
September	241	81.03%	151	42.42%	258	62.24%	357	75.54%
October	417	70.92%	237	34.91%	440	50.34%	456	74.30%
November	345	78.31%	232	31.30%	494	47.46%	410	71.13%
December	272	80.00%	296	40.56%	366	64.91%	449	64.60%
January	397	86.35%	263	47.97%	533	60.53%	381	72.43%
February	264	83.94%	269	49.24%	311	72.00%	396	74.35%
March	262	81.48%	409	41.33%	573	75.98%	583	67.19%
April	51	100.00%	301	57.89%	484	66.35%	416	69.81%
May	71	100.00%	377	53.80%	730	63.86%	661	69.01%
June	55	100.00%	145	50.00%	227	76.19%	341	78.02%
Average Absences	237.5	86.20%	268	44.94%	441.6	63.99%	445	71.64%

Clearly staff absences increased in the immediate aftermath of the Pandemic and have continued to be far higher than pre-pandemic years. This, of course makes sense though as previous to COVID teachers often came to work sicker than the students and just “pushed through”. This is no longer allowed. If a teacher tests positive for COVID they are out for a minimum of 5 days. Multiply that times teachers whose children also test positive and they have to stay home with them and you can see how the numbers add up quickly.

Based on the data I see, this is a new normal and doesn’t necessarily reflect a lack of focus on wellness. Our staff are very well taken care of and report feeling extremely supported by administration (See Best Places to Work Survey Results). We have “wellness coordinators” at each school who take on the task of offering fun healthy things for our staff to do together on a regular basis. The MEA insurance plan offers incentives for staff to participate in their wellness activities that are well promoted.

There is no question that since the pandemic we have seen a change in culture across our school professionals. Individuals now take time when needed. They do not come to work on their death beds, and they are prioritizing family over their jobs. The culture of the work-a-holic teacher who spends day and night serving students is no longer the norm. These are all overall good things, but there are “ripples” in the form of increasing needs for substitutes and a lack of a strong substitute pool.

While overall numbers of substitutes in our pool has increased over the past 4 years (which you can see demonstrated in our fill rates increasing), it just can’t keep up overall with demand. Also our substitutes are being more “picky” about where they sub. They too are prioritizing their health over the job.

I do not believe staff wellness or incentives will improve this situation. We have tried incentivizing not using sick days in the past and it has not been successful. In fact during our last negotiations cycle with the teachers and with SAA, we removed incentive language that paid out small stipends to staff that did not use certain percentages of sick/personal time because it had garnered no positive impact.

Overall, I do agree - I think that we need to think differently about substitutes in general - but I don't think incentives for staff not to use the time they have afforded to them is the answer. I think maintaining our current wellness initiatives is important. I think perhaps we should look at child care opportunities being provided by the school as an option, I think consideration of full time subs should be another option, and I think that we should do more to support our existing subs by increasing pay, providing lunches, and perhaps even helping them feel more appreciated by getting them some Gorham swag, etc. would be helpful. Of course all of these things cost $ which has been in scarce supply over the past several fiscal years.

One thing is for sure - there is no single answer to this problem and we must continue to work to solve it.

9. **Question:** Is there an actual lack of substitutes? Are the substitutes that we have just not accepting jobs? If so, what is preventing them from accepting jobs? Should we consider having at least one full time sub for each school (especially elementaries)?

   Answer: The total list of active substitutes is larger than we have had in the past 10 years. Substitutes are being far more selective in the positions that they accept, yes. We are also finding larger numbers of subs that have restrictions like they can only sub on Mondays or during certain times of the year, etc.

   We had full time subs during the Pandemic. It cost us $225,000.00 to have one full time sub at each building. When the ARF funds went away a few years ago we moved away from this model due to its expense. We can look at this again - but that would be the approximate cost to bring it back ($45,000.00 X 5 = $225,000.00)

10. **Question**: Is it correct that when a vacancy goes unfilled by a substitute it causes an ed tech to be pulled to cover a classroom. My understanding is that this is a frequent occurrence and that each ed tech could be pulled multiple times in a week. As these ed techs support the students in RTI programming, literacy, math and alternative education, it is our neediest students that are continually going without vital support. Is this the case in all 5 schools? Are there other alternative solutions than pulling an RTI ed tech?

    Answer: When a classroom teacher is out and no sub is available, we still have to hold class for the 20+ students in that classroom. We cannot ask them to stay home. Therefore, yes, we often have to pull support staff to help cover unfilled sub positions, especially at the elementary levels. I say this because at the MS/HS levels teachers can rotate students differently and give up prep periods in lieu of pay to cover classrooms vs. having to pull support staff. Yes, many of our educational technicians are being pulled, and yes it impacts our regular education ed. Techs more than our special education ed. Techs because our special education techs have to perform a specific number of hours of service to meet IEP goals or we would be in jeopardy of litigation. Yes this has the impact of students who may need RTI services in literacy/math not getting all the services they need when an Ed. Tech. has to cover classrooms. And no, there are few alternatives other than perhaps attempting to clone substitute teachers, which no one has figured out how to do yet. There is a little sarcasm there - but I hope you understand that if we had other alternatives, we would have used them by now. At the end of the day, when you have unfilled substitute needs, the only other alternative is to pull support staff to cover. It is of course, a last resort - but unfortunately it is becoming more and more of a need.

11. **Question:** In regard to the training for substitute teachers. I know this is offered only at certain times during the year. Is this something that we could offer more often? Could it be done via a webinar?

    Answer: Substitutes can work as substitutes without training at any time, they just need to complete an application, have their fingerprints done (Which we pay for) and be onboarded into our system by human resources. The course has allowed us to improve the quality of candidates we were getting after having to lower our standards for subs. Just 5 years ago (before the Pandemic) we required subs to have Ed. Tech. III status (the equivalent of 90 college credits). The pandemic changed all of this, and we quickly went to the minimum of state allowances in order to continue to survive. We now hire subs with high school diploma only and we lean on the training to make sure that the quality of the substitutes remains sufficient to work in our classrooms. COULD this be done via a webinar? Yes, but the quality wouldn't be there and that is the overall purpose of the trainings. Besides, right now these trainings are being conducted at basically no cost. Either myself or Brian Porter "instructs" the class and all administration is run through our adult education program.

12. **Question:** Is there an explanation for the dramatic increase in students served in the clinics from 21-22 to 22-23?

    Answer: Yes, there are three major reasons for this increase, two far more significant than the other. The first is an increase in the number of students who require acute medical care for issues ranging from diabetes to catheters, to feeding tubes. The second is an increase in the mental health needs of students. Often visits to the nurse's office are a "symptom" of student avoidance techniques, and third the nurses have been working hard to improve their record keeping methods. With upgrades to how they are using our IC system, the records are far more accurate. This last piece is definitely a minor piece. Items 1 & 2 are likely far more impactful towards the data seen.

Central Office:

13. **Question:** Is the timing of this new contract for photocopier services required or is the timing of the RFP flexible?

Answer: We are at the end of our 5 year lease and our current equipment will no longer be supported without a new lease/purchase agreement. The equipment is at the end of it's useful life and is frequently failing. For these reasons I would say this is not flexible and is a requirement in FY25.

14. **Question:** Have we investigated any options for reducing paper waste?

    Answer: We explored the use of products such as Paper Cut to reduce the use of paper. We piloted the program at the middle school but it did not yield the results we desired and expected.

    The fact that we are 1:1 at GMS and GHS and the now broad utilization of Google classrooms at these same grade levels does assist us greatly in the reduction of paper usage. At the PreK-5 level, many of our core curriculum programs have "consumables" (otherwise known as workbooks) associated with them and/or online capabilities which also greatly reduces the use of paper across our district.

    In the business offices we are utilizing several functions in Munis that have reduced paper waste. Having digital workflow has allowed us to eliminate the passing of paper back and forth between departments. We are also using TCM (Tyler Content Manager) to keep digital records related to purchasing accounts payable and general ledger. Additionally, most of our major forms have been moved to google forms and are now accessible to staff on our website.

15. **Question:** Copy/Printing" expenditure lines have increased 100% (or more) across the board. Why is this?

    Answer: We are at the end of our 5 year copy/print agreement. We will be issuing an RFQ next month to solicit the replacement of our entire fleet of copy/print equipment. This cost will increase significantly with the new contract.

Technology:

16. **Question:** What is the programming that is being provided as a result of the videography overtime lines that were increased? Were any alternatives considered to this besides paying overtime, if any exist?

    Answer: These costs have been in our budget now for a few years, but this is the first year we have decided to budget appropriately for them. The increase in costs occurred when we had to move our Tech Integrator position at GHS to an hourly position. This was done in order to retain a highly qualified staff member in this position. At the time, we actually reduced overall costs from what was a salaried position to an hourly position, but then when we began calculating in all the "extra work" this individual did, it became clear that these funds were needed. These "extra" tasks are all the video productions you see come from GHS. Unified B-ball videos, senior march at the elementary schools videos, a day in the life of a GHS student videos, and much more. These activities are done in addition to the staff person's "regular" job of integrationist. At this point we have limited this work to a list of "approved" work annually, but we do need to now budget for these annual needs accordingly now that we have a solid sense of what the actual costs are with this new staffing configuration.

17. **Question:** The data specialist position ($115,000.00) Do we think we will be able to fill this position? Why hasn't it been filled if posted in FY 24? How long was it posted for?

    Answer: This position was just recently filled, and our new employee began work last week. We interviewed several candidates in the fall/early winter but ultimately, the salary we offered was not commensurate with what similar positions pay in the market. By having the position unfilled for so many months, we had accumulated enough savings to increase the salary. As soon as we did, we were able to fill the position. Dervin: I strongly believe that the position of a dedicated specialist in this role will have benefits across the district and to the community.

18. **Question:** Reduction of Technology dept. Staff ($201k) – Are these filled positions? What is the impact to existing staff, what type of additional work do they absorb? There has been a lot of ideation around shared services with the Town, and technology positions are usually on that list. Have discussions been had about any cost savings with the Town via shared services or do you think this is not a viable cost saving path? I am concerned about being able to keep up with current workload and keeping up with tech advances with our current staffing.

    Answer: The two positions that make up this reduction in Technology staff are currently filled. One position is a technician position at GMS and the other is a technology integration position that is shared across the three Pk-5 schools. Existing technology staff (i.e. Dervin, Dan, Nicole, Chris, & Sam) will need to pick up the duties of making sure our hardware, software, and overall technology infrastructure still operate appropriately. We will still maintain one tech. Integrator position at GMS and one tech Integrator position at GHS. The place that we will have to keep a close eye on will be the elementary schools and making sure their immediate tech needs are met. This focus will need to be redistributed across the remaining team members.

    The technology team has been in discussions about how this might work. We have plans in place to alleviate as much as we can. An expansion of local service and support utilizing school resources has been discussed and suggested implementation planned. As on-site personnel is decreased, self-service, at least device based will be enhanced to compensate for reduced personnel. Please note: this is a 25% reduction of personnel of just 8. Not including the Tech. Director position. This team covers 5 schools and 5 departments we will do whatever possible to ensure support.

One small “good thing” about the shift in the Town’s MOU will be that we will gain back some additional time from the technician(s) we used to have serving their needs which will help offset the impact of these reductions.

The town is currently seeking to REDUCE our shared services agreements. Adding to them at this time is likely not something that they would be interested in.

19. **Question:** Thought Exchange ($19k) – Did we seek any less expensive alternatives?

    Answer: Not sure what this question is referring to. At this time, Thought Exchange software licensing expenses have been removed from the proposed FY 25 budget.

20. **Question:** What is Frontline Application software? (p 24) Would it be possible to get a list of all the software systems we have licensed, those license amounts, and what the software is used for?

    Answer: The district uses Frontline modules for a variety of things related to scheduling, attendance, substitutes, hiring and assessments. CLICK HERE to view a “living document” that outlines the majority of our software systems.

21. **Question:** In the detailed budget financials for Technology, we are increasing our Technology Consultant fees by $10k for next year. What is this anticipated to be for?

    Answer: The focus of this is to procure the services of an outside consultant to work with our school system in development of a cyber security plan. This is something we work hard at to try and keep our student and staff data safe, but things are becoming far more complex and we are feeling the need to develop specific plans and protocols to ensure the safety of this data is even more solid and we feel that an outside consultant would be best positioned to do this work and assess our current systems and their needs via this lens.

22. **Question:** (Pg. 70) The equipment lease line for FY25 is up by $126k, and Dues/Subscriptions $43k. Is this the cost for the new iPads? What is the cause for the increase to dues/subscriptions?

    Answer: There are several different things causing these increases. 1) an almost 300% increase in our phone system SA, (support agreement). This was NOT expected. The rest are standard COLA increases. 3-5%. Although some, *, Libraryworld for one, are being considerate and hitting us in reasonable stages, other vendors are not so kind. *The iPad lease is completely necessary and frankly, a deal. We'd pay far more to hold off. We gain more on resale of old devices before they become less valuable.

23. **Questions:** Pg. 13: Prior to COVID, did all students have individual devices? What would the cost savings be to return to the pre-COVID device model? What would the education ramifications be?

    Answer: Prior to COVID we were 1:1 at grades 3-12 and we had shared laptops and ipads for classroom use in grades K-2. The cost "savings" to return to this model would basically be the costs associated with most of our grades K-2 devices. I say "most" because we would still need to maintain mobile labs for classroom use. These are NOT able to be reduced at this time as we are still in a lease agreement with vendor for the devices we have. If we wanted to look at this for a future year (not replacing these devices when their replacement cycle is up), we certainly could. It would save us approximately the annual lease payment amount. The educational ramifications would be that we would have limited use of these devices for our earliest learners. This would reduce our ability to provide exposure to students at these age levels, which we know would limit their ability to acclimate to the use of technology later on. Similar to what we know about world languages…the earlier the exposure to these important tools the deeper students can go in their learning further down the road. These young minds are extremely open to learning through technology and if done right, this sets them up for far greater success further down the road.

Special Education:

24. **Question:** I am unclear in general how we staff OT/PT/Speech. Are these resources shared across all schools? Do we contract some of these roles but not others? Does contracting these positions benefit us vs. FT hire?

    Answer: We contract for our physical therapist as it is for less than 20 hours a week. Our three occupational therapists are full time across the 5 schools. We have five full time speech therapists as well as two part time therapists; one covers GMS/GHS and the others are split between the K-5 schools. Our therapists work together each year to determine how to use their services to meet all student needs and split their time for equity of caseloads, taking into account particular student needs and programming. We have found that it is usually less costly to have speech therapists on staff as there are many days/weeks where meetings and regulator expectations may take extra hours in a day that a contracted specialist may not be available to do. Having our related service specialists as part of our school communities allows them to know the programs intimately and have availability to consult regularly as needed with staff and students.

Athletics:

25. **Question:** Athletic Line Striper (+$18,000.00) are there any alternative funding sources (boosters, etc.) that could or should be considered to fund this or supplement it?
    The Athletic Line Striper is a piece of equipment that will be used daily in the spring and fall seasons to line our many athletic fields. This piece of equipment should be funded

and maintained the same as any other piece of equipment, much like a mower, seeder, aerator. This piece of equipment is a cost saver to the district. For 3 years, the athletic department has requested for a part time position, Assistant groundskeeper, at the cost of $40,000 to assist in the maintenance of our fields. This painting robot will very effectively save us time allowing for our 1 person crew to do other tasks while the robot is lining the fields. It is also a very cost effective piece of equipment when comparing to hiring another position.

26. **Question:** (Pg. 58) Do we have any types of vendor agreements in place to help with costs of resources (apparel agreements or the like)? Do we use the same vendors to save cost?
    We do not have vendor agreements, I have not found them to be not overly cost effective while also narrowing our options in some cases. However, we do work closely with a few vendors in order to save costs. We often get bid quotes as well in order to ensure that our prices stay competitive. We also use vendors that will deliver when possible to eliminate some shipping costs.

PK-5:

27. **Question:** Brain Pop and IXL licenses ($25k) – What is the programming impact here? Do teachers want access to these? Are there any grant funding opportunities that we could pursue to fund these and how could we pursue that? Have/can we explored funding options listed: https://www.brainpop.com/classroom-solutions/resources/funding or https://www.ixl.com/membership/teachers/funding

    Answer:

    We had actually reduced Brain Pop from our FY 24 budget last year, but the company came back and gave us a free subscription for the 2023-24 year to try to keep us on board. After looking at where we are now with budget requests, we feel as though we need to move forward with removing this resource in order to make sure we don't have to cut any further in staffing or other needed support programming.

    Not all Pk-5 staff currently use Brain Pop, although there are strong pockets in each school that do. It is not a tool that we specifically use for intervention programming. BrainPOP, while emphasizing engaging and accessible learning, doesn't directly teach complex concepts. Its impact is indirect yet significant. It functions as a supplementary tool for some educators, not a core curriculum. Because of this we are unable to use other supplemental funding resources to support its use such as Title I or Title II funding via ESEA money.

    IXL is currently utilized as a tier 2 intervention in math only. The original purchase of IXL was via COVID funds. It is effective, when used with fidelity, but expensive. There are free programs that can provide similar supplemental support such as Khan Academy or math fact lab. Title 2 funds could not be utilized for IXL as our primary use of IXL is not focused on teacher professional development.

Bottom line, federal funds cannot be used to support either of these programs because we do not use them as identified intervention programs, or core programs for students. There are no additional state funds out there to fund these programs outside of EPS funding, which we are already fully utilizing. Individual grants would not be sustainable over the long term. The plan would be to utilize other similar programs that can be found online either for free or for far less cost.

28. **Question:** Pg 30, it says "*You can also see that our average class sizes across these five grades is 212.*" Did we mean 21?

    Answer: Yes.

29. **Question:** Can we see an estimated teacher headcount per grade on these charts. I know it may fluctuate, but being able to see even a general estimate would help keep a pulse on ratios in relation to enrollment count.

    Answer: Please CLICK HERE to view the full spreadsheet for grades PK-5. Each school has a tab. Just click on the tab and you can see anticipated numbers for each classroom at each school. For GMS you can view total head count of classroom teachers on pg. 31 of the budget booklet. For GHS you can view total head count of classroom teachers on pg. 32.

30. **Question:** I am concerned about the projected mid-range class sizes of 23 for both Grade 1 and Grade 2 at Great Falls. Particularly Grade 1 with a known 45% of students who receive additional support. This does not factor in move-ins over the summer which could increase these class sizes even more. Is there a contingency plan for increased enrollments?

    Answer: It is always a guessing game to try and nail down specific class size numbers for the coming school year. We do our best using the tools we have (NESDEC enrollment projections, known Oct. 1 student counts, and estimated adjustments made by building principals). Do we have a specific contingency plan? No, but we do meet frequently over the course of the spring to update anticipated enrollments and problem solve needed adjustments within existing budget constraints. At the end of the day, if we need to add an ed. Tech or a teacher - we would add an ed. Tech or a teacher and we would to "find" the funding in our regular budget to do so. Although we do not have contingency lines built into our budget, we purposefully do not budget for changes in salaries and benefits of retiring staff for this very reason. The "attrition" savings is what we annually use as "contigency".

GHS:

31. **Question:** We note shifting 2 of the 3 positions saved in the K-5 rezoning to GMS. Elsewhere in this document, we've noted that we will be in a lull for GHS enrollments (page 33 "a low of approximately 795 students in 2024-2025"). Alternative to shifting staff up from K-5, did we consider a shift of staff from GHS down to GMS instead? Though the loss of 3 positions may not be ideal, I am wondering if we would find more cost savings if we instead shifted staff where there is the most "lull" in enrollment. Could these teachers then follow the surge back to GHS in 3 years?

    Answer: We did consider shifting staffing down to GMS level from the HS level, however that would NOT allow us to address the needs for our alternative learners at the high school level. The current plan reduces content area teachers at GHS, but allows us to add Alt. Ed. Teachers at GHS to address these needs in basically a "budget neutral" manner. If we decided NOT to address the need for alternative learners at the HS level, we could certainly reduce costs further. Regardless, the intention is that as enrollment increases again at GHS we would need to add back in the content area teachers.

32. **Question:** On page 56, it mentions the elimination of listed positions to recreate the alternative education program. Are these positions all filled, or are they vacant?

    Answer: They are all filled positions.

33. **Question:** Pg 14: The proposal for 2 Alt Ed teachers and 1 Ed Tech for GHS would serve approximately how many students?

    Answer: The goal is to serve approximately 10 to 14 students per grade level for a total of 40 to 56 students. This number will be subject to student needs and teacher capacity.

Facilities/CIPS:

34. **Question:** When I click into the detailed financials for Facilities, there are Salary lines for SROs. There are also SRO salary lines in each school's budget. Can you clarify how we split up the cost of SROs? Does the town pay a portion of the SRO salary?

    Answer: It is easier to follow if I break this into two separate answers:

    The first part of this question really relates to the structure of our account coding. The Maine accounting handbook requires we record our facilities costs, including SROs in the facilities program, at the location in which they work. For example, when you look at each school's full cost center budget, you will see accounts for utilities, building repairs and SROs.

    Rather than have you flip back and forth trying to identify the facilities accounts through nearly 100 pages in the budget book , we created a facilities report that shows all of the facilities accounts grouped together.   That is why you see SRO accounts in the school reports and the facilities report. Even though you are seeing them in two places, they are only in the budget once.

The second part of this answer will address how many SROs we have and how they are paid for.

We currently have 3 SROs. One is full time at the HS, another is full time at the MS and one is shared among the 3 elementary schools (⅓ each school).

These positions are full time positions within the Police Department with the school paying ⅔ and the Town paying ⅓.

35. Would it make sense to hire another part-time person for facilities versus paying $46,500 in overtime?

    Answer: No. a significant portion of overtime is used for winter snow removal. A part-time person would not be able to cover the extra time needed to open schools in time. Call-ins also contribute to OT, regular FT maintenance personnel familiar with our buildings and systems are needed to cover things of this nature.

36. **Question:** We have $9000 in the facilities budget for SRO professional development. What does this cover? Does the Town of Gorham receive any benefit from this professional development, and/or does it cover any cost associated, given that these are shared resources? This number seems significantly higher than what we give our educators, for example Great Falls School has $6k budgeted for the whole school…?

    Answer: This pays for all 3 of our SRO's to attend the National SRO conference which specializes in school safety and security. Whenever possible, we send a district administrator to the conference as well so they can learn as a team and share with the district upon return.

    The schools have minimal funds for professional development in the general fund budget because it is funded largely by Title II funds ($87,237) instead.   You will note a reference to this on the federal funds report on page 27 of your budget book.

37. **Question:** In this list (CIPS), can you clarify what "CHA Essential Needs" means?

    Answer: CHA is an architectural firm that the Town of Gorham and the Gorham School Department jointly used to conduct a large scale and town wide facilities study three years ago. It is this study and its results that we regularly refer to in CIPS and other facilities discussions when we identify priority areas for our facilities needs. You can CLICK HERE to view the CHA report that was shared with the Town upon its completion.

38. What is “Security Services” and why is Village significantly higher? Village $21,000; Great Falls $10,800 and Narragansett $10,900.

    Answer: The greater amount provides for replacement of select older cameras & security equipment. Annually we typically try to replace or upgrade cameras or security hardware at different schools. While monies are shown at Village these funds could be used at any of the primary schools. Additionally the SRO has requested additional exterior lighting and PA speakers at Village.

Transportation:

39. **Question:** Uniforms went up from $500 in FY24 to $5000 in FY25. Confirming this isn’t a typo?

    Answer: This is not a typo. The FY24 budget only included uniforms for new staff. The FY25 budget includes uniform replacement for all staff as agreed in the collective bargaining agreement.

Multilingual Learners:

40. **Question:** Pg 14: Could the existing staff meet the LAU required direct instruction hours if that was their sole focus?

    Answer: The response that comes to mind upon reading this question is that there is uncertainty regarding the term, "sole focus." In speaking with our ML Team, they tend to interpret this as meaning that if they were to no longer spent any time supporting teachers, or families or doing the administrative work that they are required by the state to do. Even if they stopped doing those things, the constraints of the different schedules at the 5 buildings would still limit the amount of instructional time they are able to spend with students. Additionally, they believe that this scenario would be devastating for our students in the long run as they would not be receiving the same level of cultural and emotional support that they need in order to thrive in school.

    As the ML Program has grown over the past few years, our ML teachers have continually shifted and narrowed their focus in order to prioritize the neediest, lowest proficiency students, and find ways to devote the maximum amount of time possible to them. This means that some students who have higher proficiency, yet still need ongoing academic and cultural support, do not have it.

    In reality, the ML teachers are already at a point to narrowing the focus as much as they possibly can. The job of ML Specialist has many moving parts. ML students need to acquire English, but they also need to learn to exist within the parameters of the system. They need classroom teachers who are willing and able to support them, as well as families who have the tools to support them at home. We are in the business of educating children in a holistic manner that encompasses all of these facets of life in American schools. Our work with students is more than just the sum of its parts.

Even with no other focus aspects to their work, the ML Instructors would not be able to meet the required instructional hours based on the LAU plan with 3 certified ESOL instructors. The team has tried to create a visual of the logistics of providing appropriate English language development instruction based on the hours listed on our LAU plan based on students grade level clusters and English language proficiency levels. This may be helpful in seeing this more clearly. LAU Plan Instructional Time Requirements

In conclusion, even if all of other duties were removed from the responsibilities of our ML Teachers (which isn't feasible given what a "whole person" approach our students and their families require), three of them could not serve 100 students in five schools in any sort of meaningful way.

Questions added after 03/04 meeting…

Special Education:

41. **Question:** Could we get more information on the increase of $100k to substitute costs for Special Education?

    This is related to the positions being moved from ESSER3 funds into the budget. These positions act similar to ed techs, but since they are not actually certified as such, we have to treat them as temporary employees/substitutes for reporting purposes.

42. **Question:** Can we get a rough estimated projection of what we can expect for future MaineCare Billing revenue, once that is up and running? Just a rough average to be able to see what the investment could eventually bring is what I'm looking for.

    I will rely on Kathy to answer what it might look like moving forward for us while I touch upon what it looked like here in Gorham in the past. Many people may not know that we did in fact bill for Mainecare up until 2015. At it's peak in FY10, Gorham received $662,000 in Mainecare revenue for one year. These funds paid for several full time positions including the billing specialist who helped us generate and monitor the revenue. Only a few short years later, in FY14, revenue plummeted to just over $36,000 when the services we had been allowed to bill for were no longer billable.
    I would expect that we may see a revenue of about $25,000 for the first year given that it will take time to establish procedures, obtain parent permissions, etc… The following year will be a full year of billing with established procedures in place so we would expect to increase from there on out. It's also important to note that we do not yet know the

expected amount of students that access Mainecare at this time and this number changes consistently throughout the school year and parents have to give permission for us to bill.

43. **Question:** Pg 40: With Special Education costs increasing so much, I'd like a more depth understanding of these programs by classroom, similar to how the K-5 classroom numbers are presented. Also, are Special Education students counted in general k-5 classroom numbers, but very rarely in those classrooms?

    Here's a reference for student to adult ratio in each program at each school, but it is difficult to share the whole story through numbers and it's a big story. Each Special Ed Resource classroom has a different amount of students each period. Sometimes they are able to group a larger number of students to work on similar individualized skills, while other times they may have 5 different students working on 5 different plans at the same time. Groups are usually small 4-6 is the average; a special ed teacher will often have a group and an ed tech will have another, with oversight from the teacher. The Special Ed Teachers will schedule their students with many things in mind: regular classroom teacher schedule (to make sure they aren't missing a content that they need to have or the social things), goal alike groups, learning needs (some may need smaller groupings or different social opportunities), related services schedules, duties they and their ed tech need to cover, ed tech breaks, etc…
    The Special Ed Students are counted in the regular ed classrooms, too. Almost all of our students are in their regular ed setting for most of their day. There are a smaller number that access the regular classroom for multiple experiences during the day and the team is always working to increase those opportunities. A very small number may not yet be ready to access a time in regular ed yet, but as the year progresses, those students are introduced to that setting and the time is gradually increasing for them. All of this takes significant consultation between a special ed teacher and a classroom teacher for planning and exploration of those opportunities.
    Below shows the current student to staff ratio we have in each program; the adult supports in each program are dependent on numbers and need. We do have some students that require significant adult support to assist in moving their skill growth forward in safety, behavior and communication (such as needing 2 adults when outside of the special ed setting).

	Great Falls Student to staff Ratio		Narragansett Student to Staff Ratio		Village Student to Staff Ratio
Resource Room	10.2: 1		10.5: 1		7.5: 1
Autism Programs	1.5: 1				1.75: 1
Functional Life Skills			1.3: 1		
Behavior Program					1.8: 1

	GMS Student to Staff Ratio		GHS Student to Staff Ratio
Resource	9.5: 1		8: 1
Autism/Functional Life Skills	1.25:1		1.5: 1
Behavior Program	3: 1		1.6: 1

44. **Question:** What's the potential to add OOD placements or other higher cost areas to the first year of MaineCare reimbursement?

    Answer: None. That's not how that works. MaineCare is a billing system. The services must first be provided and then we can bill for reimbursement of costs. Therefore, we must show the actual costs for all services first, and then we can bill for those services that are eligible to be billed for reimbursement. These reimbursements can/will go into a revenue stream that, once built, can be used to offset taxpayer expense - but we have to build it up first and then we can start using it. I would say we are at least 1 year, perhaps 2 away from being able to see the revenue side begin to impact us positively.

Gorham High School

45. **Question**: How many in-school suspensions have there been in 2023-24? How many of those can be attributed to Alt Ed learners (or those that would have been in a program if we had one in place).

    Answer:

    Gorham Middle School
    There have been 11 in-school suspensions thus far at GMS through 3/8/24. Five of the 11 can be attributed to Alt Ed learners or 45.5%

    Gorham High School
    There have been 19 in-school suspensions thus far at GHS through 3/8/24 for a total of 32 days of ISS days/time.

    Of note, the person in this position has subbed in the behavior room for 12 days when we were short ed techs.

    It is also important to note that the person in this position has covered 51 days for teachers who did not have a sub, saving the school department a good amount of money in substitute expenses.

Finally, on the few days when he doesn't have a student or cover a class, he helps by checking to make sure all exterior doors are closed, visits bathrooms to make sure students are not using them inappropriately, monitors the halls, etc.

46. **Question:** Knowing the Alternative Ed program was previously the 2 Teachers/1 Ed Tech format, would it be feasible to run it with 1 Teacher and 2 Ed Techs? Could it be possible for just the first year of its return?

    Answer: Anything is possible. However, one of the ways we have managed alternative learners in the classroom is by maintaining smaller class sizes. If you eliminate regular education teaching positions and do not add all of the alternative education staff we are proposing, which is already a reduction of what our staff originally requested, we would gravely struggle to meet the needs of alternative learners and regular education students. By training, ed techs do not have the same classroom management, differentiation, and conflict resolution skills that a teacher has; nor do they have the same level of content expertize that a teacher has. We need one alternative education, teacher, who can focus on humanities, English, and social studies, and another who can focus on math and science. These are some of the reasons we need at least two teachers because we will be covering four grade levels.

    As Ms. Cifelli mentioned last night, the only other school in Cumberland County not to have an Alternative Education program is Cape Elizabeth. Most other schools have two Alternative Education teachers plus education technicians.

    In terms of regular education, we will have a student to teacher ratio in English of 90 students to each English teacher if we eliminate a 4/5th English teacher. The Cumberland County average is 83 students to each English teacher. In social studies, we will have a ratio of 116 students to each social studies teacher; the Cumberland County average is 98. In World Language, we will have a ratio of 159 students per teacher; the Cumberland County average is 143 students per teacher.

    When we eliminated the Alternative Education program three years ago, we added a second JMG specialist to support our alternative learners. Obviously, we would need to maintain this position if we do not add the full staff needed to serve alternative learners.

    For overall comparison sake, here are the teacher staffing numbers for GHS, if we adopt the current budget, compared to the Cumberland County average:

Subject	**GHS**	**Cumberland County Average**
English	90	83

Math	99	83
Science	94	85
Social Studies	116	98
World Language	159	143
Art	406	266
Alternative Education	N/A	337
Multilingual	812	560
Health	406	628
Music	406	418
Physical Education	406	383
Technology	271	413

47. **Question:** From GHS detailed budget financials, could you clarify the increases to library/media software, instructional equipment for music, science, technology, foreign language and health, dues and memberships for fine arts?

Answer: Library/Media Software - Increase due to expanded Sora Subscription (for library, RAM lab, classroom reads, etc.). Sora is an online subscription service for students to take books out (e.g. think services like Kindle). More students and teachers are using the services. Teachers are using it for class-wide reads of books.

Instructional Equipment for Music

Guitar Rack	Currently, our guitars are stored on the floor in the stage. They often have to be moved by guitar students so that the piano can be accesseed by Mr. Mathieu. This rack will make sharing the space on the stage much easier.
Guitars	With current enrollments, students are playing on guitars that are not good for beginner players. In addition, not all guitars are the same (different tuner placements, some broken parts etc.) which makes full group instruction difficult. This money would be used to purchase 3 new guitars.
Guitar Cases	Last year, we budgeted for 3 guitars not realizing they didn't come with cases. This will allow us to have cases for all of the guitars.

Music Stands	Our current stock of music stands is starting to be in disrepair. Many of them do not work in the way that they should. This money would replace 12 stands. Over the course of the next 5 years, we could replace all of the stands in our inventory. Many current stands are decades old!
Concert Toms	Currently, we do not have a good set of concert toms. The ones we have are mismatched and do not fit the specifications of modern band repertoire that is currently being published. This would purchase half of a concert set, with the second half being ordered in the future.
Yamaha Harmony Director Keyboard	One of the biggest struggles for our band is intonation. This keyboarrd is a resource for teachers to be able to teach with beatless intonation, which is nearly impossible to simulate without a keyboard like this. Common pianos use equal temperment, which enables them to play in all of the keys, when in reality, every chord that a piano plays is slightly out of tune. This keyboard can change the key it plays in and adjust the intonation accordingly, which promotes beatless, also called just, intonation.
Wenger Music Storage	Currently, band music is stored in 3 filing cabinets in the school, and we have no more room in the music storage that we have. This would provide for more music storage which will protect an important asset of our music program and provide more space in the piano lab. This price would be for one cabinet. We may need 1, or possibly 2.
Cart for Keyboard	This cart would provide a permenant home for the harmony director keyboard, which is important to protecting such an expensive asset.

Instructional Equipment for Science

Physics	constant velocity cars	
	accelerating cars	
Forensics	DNA electrophoresis	perform DNA for crime scenes
chem	electronic balances to 4 dec.	chem and bio
chem	Tirrell burners (12)	Replacements for worn out equipment
chem	distillation condensors (2)	perform distillation techniques
Biology	Micropipet Set	Replacements for worn out equipment
Biology	D Net	Stream Ecology Labs

Forensics	White light illuminator	counterfeiting lab, DNA profiling lab
	Pipet Set	Genetics Labs
	Lab tote trays	Lab use
	Compound microscopes	need to replace 6 broken scopes
	fine point forceps	lab replacements

Instructional Equipment for Technology

Grizzly G0897 - 4" x 48" 2-Wheel Metal Belt Grinder/Sander	replace non-working metal sander
Replacement of portable power tools I.e., orbital sanders, drills, batteries	Replace old non fucntioning machines
KELVIN® Elite Kel-Timer™ Motion Timer	Replace older motion timer that is slowly failing with better technology
OMTECH	AF2028-60 - 60W CO2 Laser Engraver Cutting Machine with 20” x 28” Working Area and Auto FocusFREE Lightburn + Machine
OMTECH	6L INDUSTRIAL DUAL WATER CHILLER FOR 50W-150W CO2 LASER ENGRAVER MACHINES
IPhone Camera Lenses	Optional lenses that students can use on their own phones for video production
Ring Lights	Used for shooting video
Smart Phone Video Kits	Kit that includes a tripod, light and holder for smart phones
Tripods	Designed to hold IPhones
(4) Wacom Intuos Pro Creative Pen Tablets	Item is used to assist students in digital editing and drawing. Digital Media, Graphic Arts, Intro to Technology, Architectural Drawing, CAD
Equipment to convert desks	This will allow us to turn once classroom space into two classrooms spaces so we can fully move out of the municipal center

Instructional Equipment for World Language - They do not have an instructional equipment line.

Instructional Equipment for Health - They do not have an instructional equipment line.

Dues and Memberships for Fine Arts

Conference registration for ACDA National Convention	If I have students accepted to the National Honors Choir next year, I will need to accompany them.
Acceptance fees for MMEA District I Music Festival	Students pay auditions fees for District 1 We pay acceptance fees. Enrichment opportunity for GHS Music Students. Students chosen by audition to represent Gorham High School at the regional level. The 2023-2024 total was $625, up from $525 the year before. The numbers are trending back toward pre-COVID numbers, which was in the neighborhood of $850
Acceptance fees for MMEA All State Music Festival	Students pay auditions fees for All State. Money to help defer the cost of this enrichment opportunity for GHS Music Students. Students chosen by audition to represent Gorham High School at the state level. 2022-2023 total cost was at $2880. The fee is $255 per student. The 22/23 acceptances were lower than average due to the effect COVID19 had on participation, but is trending back to pre-COVID numbers.
Acceptance fees for MMEA Jazz All State	For one student to attend in the 2023-2024 SY, this budget item was $800. There is a potential for two students to attend this coming school year, but I do not believe 3 will attend.
Institutional Fee, MMEA	The Maine Music Educators Association requires this fee in order for our school to participate in such events as the District I Music Festival and the All State Music Festival. These dues are being raised from $192 to $246. This is the first raise in fees in over 20 years.
Attendance at MMEA Festival	Attendance for this conference and festival is required for teachers who have students who attend this festival.
Attendance at ACDA National Conference	Attendance for this conference and festival is required for teachers who have students who attend this festival.
Membership fee: National Association for Music Educators	The professional organization for Music educators. Required for participation in NAfME sponsored events (Maine All State Festival/Conference) $135 for each teacher.

Accompanist fees	$25/hour, $100/performance. Each concert requires an outside professional accompanist for at least two days of rehearsals. The average year has eight school concerts.

48. **Question:** From GHS detailed budget financials, could you clarify if the alt ed field studies expense is in addition to the ELO expenses flowing from grant funding to the budget? Also, could you provide a detailed budget financial showing only the proposed alt ed expenses?

    Answer: The ELO Field Studies are in addition to the alt ed field studies. For alt ed, we are looking at $2540 for supplies (e.g. items needed to run a classroom) and 10k for fields studies (e.g. the ability to take the students in the community and on excursions where they can learn life/work skills. Because we have not hired teachers for this program yet, these numbers are based on previous expenses from when we had a program.

49. **Question:** What is the tutor position at GHS?

    Answer: There are funds set aside in each regular education line at all schools to handle potential costs for tutoring. The regular education costs for tutoring are estimated only and are there to support students who may need to be out for medical reasons where a hospital program may provide educational programming and then we would need to pay for that. We also have special education tutoring lines, but those are in the special education budget and are used to support students within maintaining required programming when students may need to be out for an extended period of time for lots of different reasons which may range from expulsions to medical needs among other reasons..

Gorham Middle School

50. **Question:** Pg 31: If we accept the higher ratios for GMS that would reduce $190k from the budget… correct?

    Answer:

Grade Level	Enrollment 2024-2025 (in students)	Projected Students per Teacher w/out Additions	Projected Students per Teacher w/ Additional Teachers
6th	241	26.7	24.1
7th	222	24.7	24.7

8th	238	26.4	23.8

51. **Question:** From GMS detailed budget financials, could we discuss the increases in health, art, math and social studies instructional supplies?

    Answer:

    Health: FY24 Instructional Supplies=$1000, FY25 Instructional Supplies=$1900 for an increase of **$900**. The increase resulted from budgeting for new kitchen supplies to help teach cooking in Health class. Many of the supplies are 20 years old and have been used since the school opened in 2003.

    Art: FY24 Instructional Supplies=$5849, FY25 Instructional Supplies=$8142 for an increase of **$2293**. The art teachers rotate their units of study each year and in turn this requires different instructional materials. This year, the units include ceramics, painting, stop motion etc. For next year, the teachers are budgeting for printmaking, clay, mix media, etc. Printmaking and clay have greater costs for materials.

    Math: FY24 Instructional Supplies=$1529, FY25 Instructional Supplies=$1899 for an increase of **$370**. While the teachers have budgeted for slightly more graph paper, etc. to help meet the instructional need, there is not a real change in the types of materials being ordered. The increase is mostly due to rising prices.

    Social Studies: FY24 Instructional Supplies=$2451, FY25 Instructional Supplies=$3349 for an increase of **$898**. The most significant factor that impacted the increase to the budget was that a number of teachers have requested pre-designed instruction materials to help support their teaching from sites such as Teachers Pay Teachers.

K-5

52. **Question:** From Narragansett detailed budget financials, could you clarify the increases in general instructional supplies and books & periodicals?

    Answer: The increase in instructional supplies at Narragansett is due to a few reasons. Some of the supplies (paper, for example) are a per pupil calculation and for FY 25 Pre-K students and the students gained from Great Falls and Village result in a larger number of students (approximately 64 Pre-K students and 67 rezoned students.)

    An increase in students, results in an increase in staff. The supply closet orders are a per staff member calculation, and Narragansett will be welcoming new staff.

    Another supply increase is due to Pre-K unit consumables costs, which were covered by the grant for FY 24. The Pre-K curriculum requires primarily consumable materials for each of their six units, and as the curriculum focuses on hands-on, exploration opportunities for students, the materials aren't "typical" school supplies like pencils and math workbooks. Annual Pre-K screening materials have also been added to the budget and were previously purchased with grant funds. FY25 PK Breakout

Regular services Books & Periodicals increased due to larger student counts for Scholastic News (a per pupil cost) and the addition of Pebble Go, a non-fiction student research tool.

53. **Question (Becky, Jodi, Erin):** Could you please explain what Alternative Education programming looks like at this level? How many students does each elementary school's program support? Within the last 30 school days, how many times were the Alt Ed Techs pulled to sub (at each school)? What would the impact be if we didn't offer the program at an elementary level?

    Village: Our programming accommodates students who may need help in traditional settings for various reasons. By providing a supportive and flexible environment, students are empowered and thrive academically and socially, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. This inclusivity not only benefits individual students but also enriches the entire school community by promoting empathy, acceptance, and respect for differences. At Village, we have scheduled groups based on interests to assist the students in engaging in their classroom and school communities. Currently, we have 20 K-5 students accessing Alt Ed Programming (Note: 20 students has been the average over the last several years). The Alt Ed tech has been pulled 3 ½ days over the last month.

54. **Question:** Pg 51: K-5 Classroom sizes: I'd like to discuss the proposed classroom sizes for GF Grades 2 and 3, Narragansett Grade 5 and Village Grade 4. I'd like to discuss moving these from optimal to mid-size.

    Answer: This isn't exactly a question, but we can absolutely discuss this on an agenda moving forward. I would like to proactively provide you with information about what that would look like. If you CLICK HERE you can see our estimated class sizes for 2024-2025 broken out by school and by grade across grades PK-5. If we went with mid-sized classrooms for thre three listed, we COULD reduce 3 teaching positions, however the result would be creating known class sizes of 26 students per class for these grades which have higher needs than other grades. This would also not allow for any "wiggle room" for enrollments to occur over the summer that might add to these classrooms, which we typically have annually. If we went there and additional enrollments occurred over the summer, we could have class sizes exceeding the mid range that are 27 or 28 in a classroom.

Technology

55. **Question:** In the original budget booklet, we were provided this link to the Breadcrumbs for reductions. Row 40 in the Breadcrumb sheet identifies a Technology Admin Support reduction of $26,000. But, it's in the sheet mathematically as an addition, not subtraction. The 1-pager sheet shown in the March 4th meeting had the reduction number at $899,883, however, if that $26k line was in fact a reduction the math changes to $951,883. Can we confirm if that $26k reduction is still relevant, or was that row included in error in the Breadcrumb sheet?

    Answer: The $26,000 position is very similar to the Data position Heather described in the first budget meeting. When our previous Tech Director resigned his position, Dervin stepped in as Interim Director. During that time, we did not fill Dervin's previous role as Network Admin. In order for him to be successful in the Director role, we applied the savings from the open Network Admin position to fund two temporary positions to assist him. One was the full time Data role, the other is a part-time admin assistant. The admin assistant was budgeted for $26,000 and was filled in the fall of 2023. Early in the budget process, we planned to keep that position as a full-time permanent position. After making difficult decisions with the district leadership team about reductions, we decided to remove that position from the Superintendent's budget proposal.

56. **Question:** From the detailed budget financials, could you clarify the 10% increase to phone costs? I understand this was an unexpected increase, what's our ability to negotiate or move vendors?

    Answer: The increase was unexpected. But we are over a barrel. Our Avaya phone system is proprietary, (as are most), and most all of the costs associated with having a proprietary phone system come directly from the parent company, in our case, Avaya. The phones and hardware will only work through them. They don't have to negotiate and don't. They set licensing fees. Last year Avaya increased licensing by 3% per license; dropped the support option tier we were on and only offered the new plan. We are looking at moving to a less expensive option, that was not available until now, but it will still be with Avaya. I have no idea yet how much of a change that will be as we are just getting started with design. A change in our local vendor would have no impact on costs. We have explored other vendors but costs were roughly the same or more and response time due to their being out of state would be unacceptable.

Miscellaneous

57. **Question:** With all of the 1-pagers and breakdowns of Status Quo, Services Increases, Debt Service, Grant Funding, New Additions, and Proposed Reductions, my math comes to about $133k short of the total final ask for the $3,811,065 increase. I'm assuming that's other small incidentals in many places. Is there any easy way for us to see those items isolated in a single list view?

Answer: You are exactly correct. This is the total of many small incidentals throughout the entire school budget and is a result of the needs based budgeting process. We do not have them identified in a list view. That being said, if you see a specifiv account in any of the financial reports that you want further information on, please ask!

58. **Question:** Revenue Generating questions/ideas (mostly long term):

- Do we or have we considered charging a fee to rent out our facilities? I know we do a lot of space sharing with the town and other community groups, and was wondering if/how we account for the maintenance related to outside use.

- Longer term than FY25, but a neat thing in my research that struck me was about an Arizona district who started a catering service to the community with their nutrition program. I know we have a strong, well-run nutrition program - curious if we ever considered any potential avenues there? Could cross over into ELO/alternative ed opportunities for students to help run such service(s)?

Answer: We have a policy for facilities use and an associated fee schedule that we use. The problem is, our fee schedule is set up so that the Town of Gorham can use our facilities for free, and USM can use our facilities for free. There really aren't that many other organizations that request to use our facilities outside of those and us of course. Those that do are charged a fee according to our fee schedule linked above. We are working to update our fee schedule now so it will be up to date and competitive with our neighbors by opening of school next year.

In regards to the idea regarding catering. Our SNP does do catering, but typically it is for school related functions. We have not looked to go out into the community, mostly because we do not want to infringe upon already existing businesses who do do catering in the community. We would NOT want to undercut their business in our community. Instead we do work very closely with many of our restaurants and others that do catering services (MK kitchen, GHOP, Amatos, and more) to offer ELO's with students. .

59. **Question:** Pg 34: Could we get similar information to understand the total staff/student ratio?

Answer:

Grade	Number of Students (Anticipated)	Number of Staff (Anticipated)	Ratio
Pre K	64	2	32:1
K	209	13	16.1:1
1	188	9	20.9:1

2	204	10	20.4:1
3	225	11	20.5:1
4	206	10	20.6:1
5	210	10	21:1
6	241	10	24.1:1
7	222	9	24.7:1
8	238	10	23.8:1
9	212	15.5	14:1
10	201	15	13.4:1
11	207	15.5	13.4:1
12	175	15	11.6:1

AN IMPORTANT NOTE WHEN IT COME TO PK…

- We offer a.m./p.m. schedules so two teachers are working with two entire classrooms each day.
- We do purposefully try to keep incoming K classrooms low.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE WHEN IT COMES TO HS Ratios…

- These numbers are misleading as some classroom numbers can be as low as 10 while others can be as high as 33+ depending upon the class. AP Latin vs. PE for example.
- It is important to understand that the ratios we target at the HS are not necessarily student:teacher. Instead, one major number we look at is to try and make sure each teacher has no more than 110 students to prep for.
- Finally, it is important to note that what is lost when teaching positions are cut to lower ratios at the high school are typically student electives. Reducing choices for our HS students is counter productive to our meeting our mission/vision to prepare our students to success upon graduation regardless of the their future story path after high school.

60. **Question:** From the detailed budget financials for each cost center, I'd like to discuss any wage increases that exceed 5.% and any benefit changes that exceed 10%.

    Answer: I can provide this information but It likely won't be ready for the next meeting. I will include the details here as soon as it's done.

61. **Question:** How would the proposed minimum wage legislation impact this budget?

Answer: Not at all. IF, and that is only if - this legislation passes during this session, it would not impact us until FY 27. We would have some time to consider the implications and adjust.

62. **Question:** What is the rate/number of voluntary, non-retirement separations among teachers and ed techs?

    Answer: Please CLICK HERE to view a spreadsheet showing this data.
    Voluntary Separations 20-23.xlsx

63. **Question:** From the 80% of the budget that is wages, could you break out the percentage made up by each bargaining unit and the personnel not covered by a bargaining unit? (ie, teacher wages and benefits make up x%, ed techs y%, etc…)

    The approximate percentages are as follows:

    Gorham Teachers Association: 62%
    Secretaries, Assistants, Aides: 10%
    Maintenance, Bus Drivers, Cafe: 6%
    Educational Administrators: 5.0%
    Substitute Teachers: 1.50%
    Stipends: 3%
    All Other Non-Union (Business Office, Superintendent's Office, Special Services Office, Technology Department, Program Directors): 12.5%

64. **Question:** Could you supply the number of teachers at each "step" and seniority level?

    Answer: Please CLICK HERE to view a spreadsheet with this data.

65. **Question:** At what step have the teachers we've hired over the past year or two entered?

    Answer: Please CLICK HERE to view a spreadsheet with this data.

66. **Question:** Could we discuss the debt and lease obligations we currently have and when they will each end?

    Answer: Please see the debt schedule linked below for this information. You will note several tabs for review in the workbook including debt service bonds, bus lease purchases, leased classroom space and other debt commitments.

    DEBT SCHEDULE

67. **Question:** What does the data specialist do? Can we have a brief summary of what positions are in the tech department and their general responsibilities

Answer: The Data specialist, **Nicole Mathuin**, is a result of the necessary restructuring of department responsibilities. Technically it is not a "new" position. It had been a part of **Dervin Grady**'s tasks as well as Network administration and a host of other things supporting district and other departments. When I stepped up as interim director it was intended to free me to perform as Interim Tech director. Additionally, as noted earlier in this document and also in the new initiatives document, data reporting needs have increased to the point where this position as a fully dedicated position is necessary. Many districts have also found the need as well and are advertising for the position.This position handles our student information system, our state reporting requirements, keeps our assessment and communication programs synced with our student and staff data and produces needed reports and data for district administration. IE: enrollment numbers types, demographics and other longitudinal historical and assessment data. She has already begun to connect with district administration and departments to address their data and reporting needs. The technology department has a multitude of other responsibilities with the goal of having at least one person as primary and one or two as backup. In a department of this small size, cross-training and coverage is essential. **Chris Daggett** is currently acting as my second, he is also primary for all K-12 Apple device deployments and management. He is also currently acting as Network admin and is our primary Google administrator. He also has other responsibilities for various other departments too numerous to list. **Dan Howard** is our primary phone admin for both the school and town, supports all district projectors and media and manages and repairs chromebooks and all Windows-based operating systems across the district, including server support. He also is backup network, device management and all round support. I still act as primary network and server support and when needed as secondary to **Chris**, **Dan**, **Nicole** and as needed elsewhere. **Sam Morrison** has been backup for almost all of us, particularly assisting Chris with K-12 device collection and deployment at the start and end of every year and has this year taken on all K-5 iPads, and will be taking K-8 in the coming year. Additionally he provides floating support to the elementary schools in Infinite Campus and any general tech needs. This is going to become even more important with the reduction of the tech position at GMS and elementary tech integrator position. The elementary integrator, in addition to providing PD and bringing technology and resources into classrooms has also provided some in time tech support when onsite in the elementary schools. **Terri Dawson** and **Adam Parvanta** are GMS and GHS integrators. They bring tech into the classrooms and provide PD and resources to teachers teaching with technology. Sometimes also working directly with students. These positions are quite specialized. They require learned skill sets and experience with school systems that general techs do not have.

68. **Question:** Do we have a chart of projected class sizes for next year.

Answer: Question 59 above gives you student to teacher ratios for each school. We can only do class sizes for PK-5 because when students get to the Grades 6-8 and 9-12 levels they “float” more. At MS level they are organized onto teams that vary, and at the HS it is really by class offered. The PreK-5 class sizes projected for next year can be seen by CLICKING HERE. Otherwise, I think the ratios in question #59 help provide a better response to this question.

69. **Question:** Reduction of GF teacher, is that a space issue or a way to reduce the budget.

    Answer: The decision to reduce an additional teacher at Great Falls was made first using our class size guidelines and our mid-range targets. We then reviewed the results of this calculation and initially had added another teacher at Grade 2 level for next year at Great Falls, but due to budget constraints this additional teacher was removed. Space is not an issue at Great Falls for the coming year due to our attendance zone shift.

Questions Added after 3/11/24 meeting…

<u>Special Education</u>

70. **Question:** Could you provide some examples of student needs that can only be met through OOD placement? Why do we not provide these types of services within the Gorham Schools?

    Answer: One of the biggest regulations we must always consider is placement in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The least restrictive is regular education and there is a ladder of continuum to explore for each individual. Student goals/needs based on assessment and data will help the IEP determine what the LRE is for a student. When student needs are significant, they may require a program that is considered self-contained (special education for more than 60% of the day). If a student is in a self-contained program and the school is not able to progress them through their goals, the IEP team will continue to adjust their program, adding additional supports, changing programming, etc…. After many different interventions are exhausted, the IEP team will review all data to see if progress is being made on goals - if no progress on all the goals despite fidelity of interventions, the team may decide to explore Special Purpose School Placement. This is always an absolute last resort as it is the most restrictive environment as they will not have any regular education peers in these schools and we don’t want our students to be separated from our community. When a placement is made by the IEP team, the main goal is focused on improving the significant skills deficit to a level that will allow the student to return to us as soon as possible.

An example could look like a student with a developmental disability and oppositional defiance disorder that is having difficulty learning to regulate their emotions and comply with the directions/wants of adult expectations and rules. The student is in a self-contained special ed program with adult support in all regular education situations (lunch, recess, specials) with team support from a behavior specialist, social work intervention, speech therapy and occupational therapist intervention. Data shows that skills development is not consistent and that safety concerns continue to rise steadily- increase in elopement from school grounds, continual safety concerns to self and others (hurting self with school tools, seeking to hurt peers, working to get away from adult supervision, etc…). The team has adjusted the behavior plan 12 times in the past 1.5 years with some success to start each time, but it does not last and the unsafe behaviors continue to increase. The IEP team makes the difficult decision that the district is not able to meet the students needs and orders a placement.

These placements can take anywhere from 3 months to 18 months on a waiting list until there is an opening. This student may be placed in a special purpose school setting of a classroom that will be no more than 5 students, with 2 special ed teachers, a behavior specialist, 2 ed techs, and an occupational therapist just in that classroom on top of significantly more social work and speech intervention time.

Miscellaneous

71. **Question:** During the fall's Dine and Discuss event, one of the elementary school's pain points was related to building maintenance issues (ie: inclusive outdoor activity area, updating/creating accessible restrooms, etc.). Have these projects been addressed in the budget?

    Answer: Yes, these issues have been at least addressed in this budget with bathroom renovations in the CIPS proposed budget and with the work to complete the Pre K playground at Narragansett Elementary School being wrapped up later this spring. There are still issues at Village Elementary School regarding bathroom accessibility as there are no bathrooms there located within early elementary grade levels.

72. (Follow up to question #53…only received an answer re: Village School. I'm hoping for data from both Great Falls and Narragansett Schools as well.

    Answer:
    Narragansett: Seventeen students access Alternative Education at Narragansett as part of our RTI process. The goal is to provide accommodations so students can access the traditional curriculum. Each student has an individual plan, but plans can include daily check in and check outs, small groups to build skills (kindergarten executive functioning group, developing strong friendships group) and project-based learning activities (composting, food drives.) The Alt. Ed Ed Tech has been pulled to substitute 1.5 days in the past 30 days.

Great Falls: Great Falls offers alternative programming to support 15 K-5 students who face academic and social challenges. We provide personalized interventions that include creative approaches to overcoming difficulties in areas like writing, executive functioning, and attendance. Our goal is to re-engage students even when the traditional classroom setting proves insufficient.We build strong relationships with our students. We try to offer experiences that foster a positive attitude towards school and improve attendance. By utilizing a combination of short-term and long-term support strategies, we help students develop self-regulation skills to thrive inside the classroom. Our alternative ed tech has been pulled from providing this support to substitute for an unfilled positions 4 times in the past 30 days.

73. **Question:** Within the expenditure reports, under "School Administration"/Office Supplies the elementary schools are similar but there is a significant difference between elementary and the other schools. Why such a big difference?

    Answer:

    Great Falls = $650 Funds from this line purchase office materials such as cumulative folders, specialty folders, staples, laminate sheets, etc. Our paper order is included in our Instructional Supplies line.

    Village = $650 Similar to the other two elementary schools, funds from this line purchase office materials such as cum folders, staples, laminate sheets. Our paper order is included in our instructional Supplies line as well.

    Narragansett = $770: Funds from this line purchase office materials such as cumulative folders, specialty folders, staples, laminate sheets, etc. Narragansett's amount is larger than Great Falls and Village due to the additional number of Pre-K students. Our paper order is included in our Instructional Supplies line and $8007 has been budgeted for paper for FY25.

    GMS = $10,450: This is the line where we place our copy paper and shredding. We budget $10,000 for copy paper and $450 for shredding.

    GHS = We have an overall building instructional supplies line where we pay for similar things to what others listed above. We do not use this line at the high school.

74. **Question:** One of the positions we TA'd to eliminate was the JMG position (related to bringing back to alt Ed program). Is this the same role that joined in regular meeting on March 13th? Will this elimination impact our relationship with JMG?

    Answer: No. This is not the same position. The positions that presented to the School

Committee on March 13 were from the Aspire Gorham program which included Eliza Kenigsberg (Career Aspirations Coordinator), and Grace Olsen (Extended Learning Opportunity Instructor). JMG (Jobs for Maine's Graduates) is a separate program - although with a similar goal/objective - that is aimed at providing HS students specific employability skills as they learn. Students in JMG learn about the importance of appropriate attire, reporting to work on time, communication in the workplace, and all the skills related to procuring a job and keeping it once they have. Students participate in mock interviews and practice the little things like hand shakes and eye contact, etc. JMG programs are also typically smaller programs that allow students to create tight knit relationships with their teachers and their peers.

When we cut the Alt. Ed. Program 4 years ago now, we hired an additional JMG instructor to help provide employability skills to students. We had hoped that this in combination with roosevelt room supports, smaller class sizes and a freshman academy focused on project based learning that this would provide the needed services for our Alt. Ed. Learners. Data has demonstrated that this goal has not been achieved. So as we seek to add back in our Alternative Education program at GHS, we would no longer need the additional support of the 2nd JMG specialist.

This elimination will not impact our very positive relationship with JMG. They understand the need to adjust programming to best meet the ever changing needs of our learners.

Questions Asked After 3/18 Meeting…

75. **Question (Hollis/Heather):** We have TA'd the elimination of some staff positions to date. Would it be possible to get a calculation of what that cumulative reduction of staff positions made for an impact to the Mil rate?

    The table below shows the mil impact of all staff position related reductions. Please note we included the JMG contract reduction even though it is not a school employee. We wanted to show the impact since that contract works with students similar to our own staff. Also included is the ½ fte reduction to the new Speech Therapist request.

Estimated town valuation	$2,943,461,375.00	
Per penny on mil rate	$29,434.00	
Position Reduced	**Amount Reduced**	**Impact On Mil**
Reduction of GF Teacher	$ 95,000.00	$0.032
Reduction of Technology Dept. Staff	$ 201,004.00	$0.068
Reduce Mandarin (GHS)	$ 57,800.00	$0.020
Reduce SS Teacher (GHS)	$ 95,000.00	$0.032
Reduce JMG Contract (GHS)	$ 27,000.00	$0.009
Reduce ELA Teacher (GHS)	$ 76,000.00	$0.026
.20 Art	$ 14,000.00	$0.005
.50 Speech Therapist	$ 47,500.00	$0.016
Total	**$ 613,304.00**	**$ 0.21**