

Reading Public Schools
October 18th Override Ballot Question Information Sheet

Background

The Town of Reading is currently considering a 7.5 million dollar override ballot question which will be voted on by the community on October 18th. In the first year of the override funding, the town would allocate \$2,960,000 to the school department and \$1,540,000 to the municipal budget. The amount allocated to the school department will rectify the identified 2 million dollar structural deficit in next year’s school department budget—and will restore or address several other high priority areas which the district has been unable to effectively address due to budget reductions over the last few years. If the override is approved, the Reading Public Schools will receive an additional \$2,960,000 in FY18 and a total of \$5,000,000 from the override over the next several years. This document provides information as to what the outcome will be if the override is approved by the voters and what the outcome will be if the override is not approved. For a more detailed breakdown of the data and the information, please refer to the [Override section](#) on the Town of Reading website and the [School Committee budget section](#) on the Reading Public Schools website.

If the Override is Approved

The Reading Public Schools has been meeting with the community for the last several months to identify the challenges and needs for the School District. Through that process, specific areas and challenges were identified and included in the amount that the school department will receive if the override is approved. On August 28th, the School Committee voted on a prioritized list that would be funded if the override is approved. Most of the funding will be used to sustain current levels of service by addressing the current \$2 million deficit, and the remaining \$960 thousand will support those identified challenges (see the below list). Although this funding will not solve long term challenges such as educational space and tuition-free full-day kindergarten, it will help the district immediately address other important areas—such as remaining competitive with other towns in hiring and retaining qualified staff, restoring health education at the middle schools, restoring high school teaching positions that were eliminated this year, providing support for struggling students, and providing curriculum and special education leadership to better support teachers and strengthen our programs. In this way, the below table is not a wish list; rather it is a list developed in a year-long discussion with staff and community about priorities for our schools, and it represents resources that are common in comparable towns and districts. It is well recognized that our staff is a dedicated and hard-working group that prides itself in doing what is in the best interest of our students. The resources below will support teachers and administrators, continue to improve our schools, keep the district comparable with other towns, and provide support for our students.

Resources Needed to Address Challenges and Structural Deficit

Area	Funding Needed
1. Structural Deficit (.7% Budget Increase in FY18)	\$2,000,000
2. Salary Adjustments	\$360,000
3. Middle School Health Education	\$140,000
4. High School Program Improvement	\$110,000
5. Additional Supports for Struggling Students (Tutors, BCBA)	\$107,000
6. Maintain School Transformation Grant Funded Positions-Grant Funded through FY19(Data Analyst/Coach, Administrator for Social Emotional Learning)	0
7. Curriculum Supervision Leadership	\$195,000
8. Special Education Leadership	\$48,000
TOTAL	\$2,960,000

If the Override Is Not Approved

If the override does not pass, approximately \$2,000,000 would need to be reduced from the FY18 school department budget. Below is an overview of the impact that such reductions would have on the Reading Public Schools. Since the school department has been making personnel and non-personnel reductions for the last three years, the majority of the reductions would be personnel in order to total 2 million dollars. Some non-personnel expenses (perhaps 10-15% of the total reductions) could be made as a one-time cut for FY18 only; however, many of these would most likely need to be restored the following year. Without the input of the entire budget process that we go through each year with the community, staff, and School Committee, it would of course not be appropriate to determine specific positions or programs that would be impacted. On the next page however is a potential list in *general* terms of the types of cuts that would be necessary to reach a total of \$2,000,000 in reductions to the FY18 budget (including approximately 30-35 FTE in personnel or 5% of total staff).

It should be noted that while the below table does not attempt to quantify the specific impact on student outcomes, such large reductions on any school system may also impact students in ways that are not easily projected. Based on current financial and enrollment information, the below examples would total approximately \$2,000,000 in budget reductions for next year.

Impact to School Department Budget if Override is Not Approved

Level	Reduction	Impact Information
Elementary School	4-5 FTE Classroom Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom Teacher reductions at this level for second year in a row Increase in average class sizes, with some classrooms increasing up to 26 students in Grades K-2 and 28 students in Grades 3-5 (Based on current enrollment projections) Would not be able to conform to School Committee class sizes guidelines established in 2005.
Elementary School	12-13 FTE Support Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elimination of non-mandated classroom personnel or support staff. Level of support currently being provided to both teachers and students would be significantly decreased.
Middle School	10-11 FTE Classroom Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in class sizes Elimination of programs and/or course offerings Would cause a change in the middle school interdisciplinary model and impact vertical course opportunities/pathways as students enter high school
High School	3-4 FTE Classroom Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom teacher reductions at this level for second year in a row Increase in class sizes Elimination of specific programs and/or courses (for instance AP offerings and/or electives). Impact on current RMHS Graduation requirements Reduced course access for some students due to scheduling limitations and/or number of course sections Potential negative impact on some students' college acceptances
District	1-2 FTE District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced support for administrators, teachers, and families Further increase the workload of the building principals and school-level staff
All levels	Curriculum funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on continuing implementation of the Science curriculum and alignment with the recently updated Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Science & Technology/Engineering Years 2 and 3 of Science/Engineering implementation will depend on Finance Committee and Town Meeting's support of Free Cash allocation
All levels	Building per pupil budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of materials and supplies for classrooms and teachers.
All levels	Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less training for teachers and a delay in professional development plans for instructional practices aligned with new curriculum.
All levels	Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delayed replacement of computers and less availability of technology for students in Grades K-12

Conclusion

Our community has been very supportive of our schools through their investment of time and funding. Unfortunately, the projected revenue forecasts indicate that the FY18 budget will result in reductions for both Municipal Government and the School District. The funding provided by an approved override will avoid additional cuts in programs and services—and help address the challenges that our district is facing. We have seen firsthand the commitment that our community has made to education over the last several years because our citizens value the importance of education and the role that it needs to play in a community. There is no question that a major indicator of the *quality of life* for everyone in a community can be measured by the quality of its schools and by a community's commitment to its children. In this way, the quality of a school district affects *every single person* in a community, and the Town of Reading is no exception. We welcome your questions and comments regarding the information presented in this document. Please do not hesitate to contact the Reading Public Schools at 781-944-5800.