



# King Philip REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 17, 2025

To: King Philip Regional School District School Committee  
From: Dr. Rich Drolet, Superintendent  
Re: Budget Narrative - FY26 Budget

## Introduction

This proposed FY26 budget proposal for the King Philip Regional School Committee follows the [budget calendar](#) shared in the fall of 2024 to help guide us in the development and communication of the FY26 King Philip Regional School District budget. This FY26 budget proposal maintains our high level of services for all students, plus attains goals in restoring some positions that needed to be reduced last year.

[King Philip Regional School District's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan](#) was created in the spring of 2024 and adopted by the King Philip Regional School Committee in summer of 2024. This plan includes new strategic objectives, as well as our King Philip's Regional School District's mission, vision, and core values. Focus areas and priorities outlined in this plan were developed to serve as a focus for district improvement for the next five years.

In developing this budget, I worked closely with our King Philip District Executive Leadership Team. This recommended budget addresses the needs of our students while remaining fiscally responsible. We will continue to (1) strive to provide increased innovative learning experiences for our students, (2) work diligently with our learners to help them develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to succeed in college, career, and life; and (3) offer high quality educational courses, effective programs, and top-notch extracurricular activities.

## **Chapter 70 State Funding for our King Philip Regional School District**

After receiving \$7,944,040 from the state in Chapter 70 funding for FY25, King Philip will be receiving limited additional Chapter 70 state funding monies for FY26 (\$8,234,203). It should be noted that this estimated slight increase in state aid/chapter 70 funding (\$290,163 increase) is always subject to change.

## **Massachusetts State Budget for Education Increased by about 6%... but not for Most Districts**

As part of Governor Healey's proposed budget released on January 22nd, 2025, there is an overall increase of about 6% to education for FY26 in Massachusetts, which is great. Unfortunately, King Philip (as well as Wrentham, Plainville, and Norfolk) is one of 232 "hold harmless" districts who will share just about \$37,000,000 of the \$420,000,000 increase in education by the state. 22 other school districts will share the majority of the remaining \$383,000,000 increased in state aid in FY26. State aid has dropped from accounting for 25.6% of KP's total revenue in FY18 to only 22% in FY25 (this decrease in being largely absorbed by member town assessments).

The [Student Opportunity Act](#) (SOA) is in its 5th year of a 6-year of implementation. The premise of the Student Opportunity Act was intended to make state funding in K-12 schools in Massachusetts significantly more robust and equitable. Historically, underinvestment had plagued [Gateway Cities](#), which serve a disproportionate share of low-income, English Language Learners, and students of color. Districts in Gateway Cities are receiving over seventy percent of the annual aid from the SOA, while serving just about a quarter of all students in Massachusetts. Here is a [link](#) which documents some challenges of recent inflation limiting investments from the SOA.

## **Overall Financial Picture for King Philip**

Not including related transportation cost increases, as you remember from FY24 to FY25 our out-of-district special education tuition costs increased significantly. Now from FY25 to FY26, we have attained a reduction in students attending costly out-of-district special education program placements. A large part of these out-of-district tuition savings is due to our King Philip Regional School District

being added as a new member district into the TEC (The Education Cooperative) Collaborative beginning on July 1, 2025, in addition to already being a member in the Bi-County Collaborative.

In planning with our principals and school district leaders, if we were to advocate for a full *needs-based* budget, costs would rise to the point where we would have an approximate 6.7% (\$2,694,303) overall increase for FY26 when compared to FY25. To get such a large percentage increase down to our reasonable overall increase of 4.13% (\$1,657,849), for FY26 we will utilize a combination of a *level-service* budget and *needs-based* budget (much closer to *level service*). With a combination of a *level-service* budget and *needs-based* budget, we will keep all staffing positions and services from FY25, while also meet mandated student needs by adding one position (EL/ML teacher) and restoring seven positions (five teaching assistants, one special education teacher, and one speech-language pathologist) back into FY26's budget that were cut last year. As a reminder, twenty positions needed to be cut from our King Philip Regional School District budget this year for FY25. The bulk of the 4.13% increase to our proposed FY26 operating budget is due to annual contractual increases, health insurance costs, and school choice out/virtual school tuition increases.

### **Successful New Programming This Year in FY25**

Despite planning staffing reductions at this time last year to be implemented for this 2024-2025 school year (FY25), we were able to plan for and offer new specialized therapeutic programming this year through reallocation of staff. I am pleased to report that this new program started at King Philip High School this year for some students we consider to be at the highest level of risk due to social-emotional dysregulation, anxiety/depression, and oftentimes prior hospitalizations, has been successful. This program provides academic and counseling support in a single space every day, with clinical care coordination. This new program has already allowed us to keep more of our students in-district who might otherwise require an out-of-district placement.

In the past year, as previously mentioned I am pleased to report our number of out-of-district students has decreased. As it relates to our budget, we will continue to strive to reduce the number of special needs students who need to be educated outside of our public school district by strategically investing in

specialized programming and related staff. Like at the high school, the special education teacher position being restored and mentioned below at King Philip Middle School will also serve students who require specialized instruction while providing cost-effective programming compared to out-of-district placements. In addition to helping us meet our legal and moral obligations to educate students locally and in the least restrictive setting, we believe this program will continue to generate substantial cost savings that produce a long-term net fiscal benefit for the district.

### **New Position in FY26**

The one new position not simply being restored to King Philip's FY26 budget is an English Language/Multi-Language teacher. This new EL/ML teacher is our highest priority position for FY26, as our number of English language learners has increased sharply from seven to about forty students in the past eighteen months. We have already added this EL/ML teacher this year at King Philip High School, which was primarily paid for by a DESE grant for this year only due to the opening of the Norfolk shelter last spring/summer. We will keep this position in place for the 2025-2026 school year to officially go from two to three EL/ML teachers in our King Philip Regional School District for FY26. We plan to pay for the position for FY26 with new DESE grant funds which we expect to receive this spring/summer; however, these funds are not yet allocated by DESE for FY26. We will reevaluate whether or not we still need this position for FY27 (2026-2027 school year) at this time next year; if we need to keep the EL/ML teacher position beyond FY26 (2025-2026 school year), we will most likely need to work to build this new position into FY27's operating budget. Listed below is the one new position needed to continue mandated student services in FY26:

- English Language/Multi-Language teacher (KPHS - \$95,000)

### **Restoring Some Positions in FY26 Reduced This Year in FY25**

As previously mentioned, twenty positions were reduced as part of KPRSD's FY25 budget proposal. In terms of the positions we plan to restore in FY26, we will add five teacher assistants and restore a special education teacher position, as well as a speech-language pathologist position previously in place during FY24 that needed to be cut this year. Listed below, in order of priority, are positions that were reduced this year which are now being planned to be restored

as part of FY26's budget. It should be noted that all of these positions are needed to meet student service requirements as outlined in our students with disabilities' IEPs (Individualized Education Programs):

- Teacher Assistants (3 at KPHS, 1 at KPMS, and 1 "Links" in our 18-22 year-old program - \$167,000)
- Special Education Teacher (KPMS - \$67,000)
- Speech Language Pathologist (District - \$67,000)

### **Facilities Upgrades & Instructional Supplies and Services Increases**

Our leadership team has carefully weighed all decisions in planning for this FY26 budget to meet the needs of our students, as well as act in a fiscally responsible manner. Last year in planning for FY25, in addition to making many reductions to staffing, we adjusted and reduced numerous line items that had been underspent in past years. Besides the positions mentioned above in the FY26 budget, \$146,000 is being added to facilities lines and a total of \$131,193 is being added or restored to other instructional supplies and services line items that were reduced this year as part of FY25's budget.

#### **Facilities Upgrades**

Here is a list of facilities upgrades totaling \$146,000 being added to King Philip's FY26's budget:

- Energy management controllers (KPHS)
- 10 Bathroom doors (KPHS)
- Exterior doors (KPMS)
- Skylight safety cages (KPHS)
- 5 Roof exhaust fans (KPMS)
- IDF 2 split for IT Supply Closet (KPMS)
- Interior electric door magnets (KPHS)
- Infrared moisture scan (KPMS)
- Main water valve (KPMS)

#### **Instructional Line Item Increases**

Below is a list of other instructional supplies and services line items being added or restored to FY26's budget:

- McLean Hospital partnership/special education (KPHS)
- Contracted services/therapy/special education (KPMS)
- Prof. Dev./Open Architects data warehouse (District)
- Audio/equipment/special education (KPMS)
- SEL consultants/special education (KPHS)
- Prof. Dev./conferences special education (KPMS)
- English textbooks (KPHS)
- Speech equipment/special education (KPHS)
- TV studio equipment (KPHS)

### **Cost Increases for Athletics**

In recent years King Philip has been utilizing Athletics Revolving account funds to help offset increases in costs associated with our top-notch athletics programs since 2019-2020 (Covid). Our FY26 budget proposal includes the District increasing \$227,582 to our athletics operating line item budget to offset and manage these continued future athletics costs increases (athletics transportation, coaching stipends, game and event officials, athletic trainers, etc.).

### **Excess & Deficiency**

As you know, every regional school district shall maintain an excess and deficiency fund on its books of account. At the end of every fiscal year, any surplus or deficit in the district's general fund shall be closed to the excess and deficiency fund. A regional school committee may use all or part of the certified balance in the excess and deficiency fund as a revenue source for its proposed budget. The certified balance cannot exceed 5% percent of the proposed budget (if it does, the regional school committee shall use the amount in excess of 5% as a revenue source for its proposed budget). In recent years, KP has been using \$400,000 annually as a revenue source from E&D to help fund the subsequent year's operating budget. This year, we plan to utilize slightly less (\$300,000) from E&D to be more conservative in helping to fund our FY26 operating budget because:

1. Last year, KPRSD ran a deficit and our E&D fund went down from 1,303,188 for FY24 to \$960,984 for FY25 (down \$342,204) and we do not want to continue that downward trend if there are no surplus or turn back

monies at the end of FY26 or subsequent fiscal years as fixed costs continue to increase;

2. We aim to try to build E&D back up closer to 3%, which would be \$1,248,101. As previously referenced, E&D can go as high as 5%, which would be \$2,080,168
3. As of now, we are anticipating approximately \$300,000 to be able to be turned back to E&D at the end of this fiscal year, which would simply replenish \$300,000 of the \$400,000 that was taken from E&D to help offset this year's FY25 King Philip operating budget; thus, we anticipate E&D to decrease up to another \$100,000 for FY26, or remain flat once the amount is certified for FY26
4. These are our only reserve or stabilization monies in case of emergency costs (i.e. facilities emergency, student with special needs gets outplaced into a costly residential setting)

### **Looking Forward to FY27 and Beyond**

We are currently working on compiling an updated King Philip Regional School District Capital Improvement List, which we should present at tri-town town meetings next year. The twenty-year bond from our 2006 school renovations will expire next year. Our greatest priority to present to you in the next year will be for our roofs being replaced, which are nearing twenty years old. With your support and vote, today we submitted a [Statement of Interest](#) through the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for roofs to be replaced at both KPMS and KPHS, as we now qualify for MSBA's Accelerated Repair Program. We want to get in the queue as soon as possible to hopefully be approved for MSBA funding for our roofs in the future. Besides that, we will need a King Philip High School turf field replacement and tennis courts replacement in about three to five years.

### **Gratitude for King Philip School Committee and Tri-Town Support**

We sincerely appreciate the support of our King Philip Regional School Committee, as well as our parents, residents, and town leaders from Wrentham, Plainville, and Norfolk. We will continue to serve our students to the best of our ability and do everything we can to support our students and families, while also making smart fiscal decisions which our King Philip Regional School Committee, town leaders, and town residents can support.