

Reporter: Peggy Wargelin

Date of Report: 11/28/17

Meeting: SC Budget Subcommittee with liaisons from Finance Committee and Peggy Wargelin

Wally chaired the meeting. Minutes for the 11/16/17 meeting were approved. This meeting was spent discussing the results of more-detailed investigations into available data and possible categories which might be used for meaningful benchmarking.

Teacher Contracts - Teacher contracts were reviewed for this meeting for 7 of the 10 towns to be used for benchmarking. (The missing three contracts will be obtained before the next meeting.) Apparently Lexington puts benchmarking language in their teacher contracts, saying they aim to be "at or above average compensation" (listing what that includes) for 10 towns. Their comparable towns were chosen by: % of students going to 4-year college, standardized test scores, class size, ave. per pupil expenditure, and salary max/min for Bachelor's, master's, and master's+30. The towns are: Acton/Acton-Box, Belmont, Concord/CCHS, Wellesley, Brookline, Newton, Sudbury/Lincoln-Sud, Weston, Westwood, and Winchester.

Some details which varied a lot between contracts were compared and discussed:

- Teacher time in classroom: days of school, how religious holidays are handled, sick/personal/bereavement days (is there carryover/buyout and under what conditions/price? Some towns have no buyback, most (or all) are phasing it out. Concord's buyback rate is very generous for previous contracts, but the town is in the process of phasing out buyback.) Some towns put days used for family illness in a separate bucket, some require use of personal or vacation days.

- Salary - Number of Steps, Max and Min employee salary, ratio of Max. base salary to M+ salary

Some towns are above average for Bachelor's salary but below average for Master's with a lot of experience, while some are the opposite. Contracts define a grid for each "Lane" with "steps" (rows) for each year you have worked there. These compensation tables define base pay = one grid for each lane; a step change = salary increase. Move employee to higher step on this year's grid to get raise. "Scale" is the COLA - how the amount in each box of each table changes from year to year; after employee is in the correct location on grid for this year, use next year's grid's value in that location for next year's salary. This is COLA increase.

- Components of salary - base salary at education/experience level, longevity increases if any, health care

- Longevity payments - categories vary, as does what is paid extra for each.

- Student Load - number of students for a given teacher. sometimes this isn't mentioned in a contract, some towns specify a target number or number of classes or maximum student load.

- Specificity of work time - Contracts may specify number of classes, whether teachers are required to be in the building before or after school, how many prep periods/meetings, etc. or not. Concord is on the "less specific" end on this.

At this level of detail data can't be quantitative, but perhaps some qualitative info can be conveyed by showing where our town is in the band of values for comparison towns. (Perhaps

put this info in footnotes?) Analytically, perhaps benchmarking can say something like "80% of this expense lies in base salary plus health care, so we are using this combined value for benchmarking" and have concrete values for each town for that calculation. Need to home in on what values provide most useful information. The items which seem to have the largest effect on the cost of this category are unsurprisingly those with an effect on the number of teachers and the salary of those teachers: Student load and steps/lanes.

For next meeting:

- salary = Steps/Lanes. A team of people is going to try to look at the grids in each town's teacher contracts and find an analytical way to benchmark this. Perhaps choose grid values from 2017-18 contracts for three employees: a typical new hire, someone with more experience in the middle of their career, and someone almost at retirement in each district and compare base salaries for those three employees? Someone is going to investigate how the average teacher salary is actually calculated for DESI.
- medical - someone is going to look into this expense across towns in the teacher contracts. There is an old review across towns which was done in 2008 which can be used as a starting point.
- student load - look at Emerson student health survey results across towns and compare to teachers' student load in each town. Do the results of the health survey vary if the student load for teachers is different?

Technology - Towns differ drastically in where they report these costs in their budgets, how much they value technology in instruction, and the state of their current technology infrastructure. In looking at 7 towns so far, Lexington (6.8%) and Wellesley (~2%) provide "clean" numbers, with detailed information about what is being spent where. L/S has a very outdated system and doesn't spend much so their costs are low - 2% "instructional support", but how much of that is tech? D/S spends .5%, but they are known for not caring about technology. Wayland spends 2.7% on instructional tech. As a double check, we need to compare these numbers with the amounts in DESI.

Even when technology spending is broken out from general "instructional costs", there are actually two types of spending in the technology-only category - spending for "instructional technology" used in the classroom and spending for the "administrative technology" used to support it = internet backbone, support tech. We seem to be in the ballpark for this spending, but many districts break out the "administrative technology" costs and put them separately. To make things clearer in the budget, the schools are creating a new category in the operating budget for next year, the "Technology Capital Investment Fund".

For next meeting:

Continue looking into how comparison towns document technology expenses.

OPEB - There is a database called PERAC with all available OPEB information. It is online, and generates a summary report of the status of each retirement plan in the state. CCHS employees are covered by the Concord retirement fund via payments from the CCRSD, so the CCRSD doesn't have a separate fund (though some regional districts do, e.g., Acton/Boxboro and

Dover/Sherborn). Concord/Carlisle districts are fully funded, but most towns are not even close. This is a large expense!

Regional School comparisons - No time to work over the recent holiday, so will prepare for next meeting.

Next meeting is Wednesday, December 13th at 7:30am at Ripley.