



WESTPORT

TOWN OF WESTPORT
REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING
REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING PACKET
MAY 5, 2026
07:30 PM



TOWN OF WESTPORT

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING AGENDA

MAY 5, 2026
07:30 PM

Call

All Representative Town Meeting members and inhabitants of the Town of Westport are hereby notified that a meeting of the Representative Town Meeting members will be held at Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Ave. in the auditorium on Monday, May 4, Tuesday May 5, and, if necessary, Wednesday May 6, 2026 at 7:30 p.m. for the purposes listed below. If necessary, the meeting shall reconvene on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 to deal with any agenda items not disposed of at the adjournment of such meeting.

Anticipated to be addressed on Tuesday, May 5:

Attachment: [Resolutions.pdf](#)

1. Board of Education Budget

To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the estimate and recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Board of Education for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.

Attachment: [_1 Board of Education Recommended Budget - RTM Finance.pdf](#)

Attachment: [_1 Finance Committee BOE 04-21-26 Final as of 04-28-26.pdf](#)

Attachment: [_1 Appendix B for RTM Finance report 04-28-26.pdf](#)

Attachment: [_1 RTM Education Committee Report.pdf](#)

**RTM Meeting
May 4, 5 & 6, 2026**

RESOLUTIONS

MONDAY

(1)

RESOLVED: That the First Selectmen's Budget items recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting be adopted, and the sum of \$_____ for the First Selectmen's Budget is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures and such sum shall be added to the amount appropriated for the Other Agencies and Organizations Budget and the Board of Education Budget.

(1)

RESOLVED: That the Other Agencies and Organizations Budget items recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting be adopted, and the sum of \$_____ for the Other Agencies and Organizations Budget is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures and such sum shall be added to the amount appropriated for the First Selectmen's Budget and the Board of Education Budgets.

(2)

RESOLVED: That the Town Railroad Parking Fund Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting, be adopted and the sum of \$_____ is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures.

(3)

RESOLVED: That the Town Sewer Fund Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting, be adopted and the sum of \$_____ is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures.

(4)

RESOLVED: That the Wakeman Town Farm Fund Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the

Representative Town Meeting, be adopted and the sum of \$_____ is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures.

(5)

RESOLVED: That property taxes for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027 shall be due and payable in four quarterly installments and the dates upon which such quarterly installments are to be due and payable shall be the first days of July, October, January and April, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That all taxes in an amount of \$100.00 or less shall be due and payable in a single installment on the first day of July, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs.

(6)

RESOLVED: That the motor vehicle tax shall be due and payable in a single installment, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs.

(7)

RESOLVED: That upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance a request by the Fire Chief, the sum of \$495,615 to the General Fund Account Funds for covering the costs related to hiring for five unanticipated openings is hereby appropriated.

(1)

TUESDAY

RESOLVED: That the Board of Education's budget items as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting be adopted and the sum of \$_____ for the Board of Education Budget is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures; and be it,

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town of Westport General Fund Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting, be adopted and the sum of the Board of Education Budget, the First Selectmen's Budget, and the Other Agencies and Organizations Budget in the amount of \$_____ is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures and that for the purpose of raising a tax on the Grand List of 2026, the sum of \$_____ is hereby appropriated.



Westport Public Schools

2026-2027 BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDED BUDGET

RTM-FINANCE APRIL 21, 2026

Annual and 2026-2027 Budget Priorities

Annual Priorities	2026-2027 Budget Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue Reputation as Premier School District ➤ Prudently Maintain Current Services ➤ Ensure Safety & Security of Students and Staff ➤ Respond to Facilities Reports and Evaluations ➤ Comply with all Federal & State Mandates 	<p><u>Protect and Preserve:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Current Level of Staffing and Programming ➤ Honor all “Budget Assumptions” ➤ Restructuring of Administrative Positions, Create “Assistant Director of Facilities & Security” Position ➤ Initiate Strategic Plan Action Steps ➤ Implementing Action Steps of the District Plans (eg. Tri State Review, Program Evaluation, etc.) ➤ Supporting the Work of Maintaining Our Facilities



The Basics: FY27 in Brief

Budget Request	Amount	\$ increase	% increase
Superintendent's Proposed Budget (TOTAL)	\$158,613,623	\$8,241,703	5.48%
<i>Breakdown:</i>			
<i>Current Services Budget (CS)</i>	158,735,536	8,363,616	5.56%
<i>Changes due to Enrollment</i>	(212,554)	(212,554)	-0.14%
<i>Changes due to Program</i>	90,642	90,642	0.06%
CS + Administrators & Central Office Requests (TOTAL)	\$158,895,658	\$8,523,738	5.67%
<i>Breakdown:</i>			
<i>Current Services Budget</i>	158,988,536	8,616,616	5.73%
<i>Changes due to Enrollment</i>	(183,520)	(183,520)	-0.12%
<i>Changes due to Program</i>	90,642	90,642	0.06%



Budget Request	Amount	\$ increase	% increase
Superintendent's Proposed Budget	\$158,613,623	\$8,241,703	5.48%
Administrators & Central Office Requests	\$158,895,658	\$8,523,738	5.67%
Reductions (TOTAL)	(\$282,035)		-0.19%
PERSONNEL:	Requested FTE	Adjustment	In Budget
102 Teachers Regular Ed. (0.4 Financial Literacy - SHS)	0.4	(0.4)	-
102 Teachers Regular Ed. (-3.0 Enrollment)	(3.0)	-	(3.0)
109 Teachers Special Education (1.0 BMS)	1.0	-	1.0
120 Non Certified Supervisors (Facilities – Asst. Director)	1.0	-	1.0
139 Board Certified Behavior Analysts	<u>2.0</u>	=	<u>2.0</u>
TOTAL REQUESTED FTE	1.4	(0.4)	1.0
	\$205,300	(\$28,244)	\$177,056
Less: 120 Non Cert. Supervisors (Restructuring Health Svcs. Super.)	(\$82,761)		
Less: Related FICA/Med	-	(791)	
Add: 123 Paraeducators Special Ed. (drivers – extra hours)	29,000		
Add: Related Health Benefits	<u>40,000</u>		
	(\$13,761)		
PERSONNEL INCREMENTAL COST (Wages & Benefits)	\$191,539	(\$29,035)	\$162,504



Budget Request	Requested	Adjustment	In Budget
PERSONNEL INCREMENTAL COST (Wages & Benefits)	\$191,539	(\$29,035)	\$162,504
NON PERSONNEL ADJUSTMENTS (select accounts)	\$707,229	(\$253,000)	\$454,229
TOTAL ADJUSTMENT TO ADMIN & CO BUDGET REQUEST		(\$282,035)	
NON PERSONNEL:	Requested	Adjustment	In Budget
641 Textbooks (Teaching and Learning)	\$537,229		\$454,229
• Grades 4 & 5 Social Studies		(35,000)	
• Math AP Stats and Middle Schools		(48,000)	
732 Equipment New Non Instructional (Facilities - cleaning)*	100,000	(100,000)	-
734 Equipment Replacement Non Instructional (Facilities – truck)*	70,000	(70,000)	-
TOTAL NON PERSONNEL	\$707,229	(\$253,000)	\$454,229
* Cover costs using BOE Carry Over Account			
OTHER PROPOSAL CHANGES:			
325 PPT Consultations (BCBA proposal)	\$305,000	(\$88,000)	\$217,000
330 Other Professional Services (BCBA proposal)	213,088	(88,000)	125,088
511 Transportation Special Ed. Internal (Connections proposal)	1,563,808	(207,660)	1,356,148
812 Student Athletics (Uniforms)	95,000	=	95,000
	\$2,176,896	(\$383,660)	\$1,793,236



FY27: Health Insurance

Account	FY26 Budget	FY27 Budget Est.	% increase	\$ Increase	Budget Impact
210 – Health Insurance	\$22,583,580	\$25,200,340	11.6%*	\$2,616,760	1.74%
Budget Analysis – Carving Out Health Insurance Increase					
FY27 BOE Recommended		\$157,863,623	4.98%	\$7,491,702	4.98%
<u>Less: Health Insurance Increase</u>		<u>-\$2,616,760</u>		<u>-\$2,616,760</u>	<u>-1.74%</u>
FY27, Net of health insurance increase		\$155,246,863		\$4,874,943	3.24%
<p>*State Partnership Plan (February 2026 guidance): Medical/Rx +15.0% <i>(BOE & BOF revised to 12.5%)</i> Lockton guidance: Dental +8.0% Net, \$750K Insurance Fund charge <i>(BOE & BOF revised to \$220,907)</i></p>					



FY27: Budget Impact

Account	FY27 Budget	YOY \$ variance	Budget Impact
FY27 BOE Recommended	\$157,863,623	\$7,491,703	4.98%
<u>Less: Health Insurance increase</u>	<u>-\$2,616,760</u>	<u>-\$2,616,760</u>	<u>-1.74%</u>
FY27, Net of health insurance increase	\$155,246,863	\$4,874,943	3.24%
<u>Less: Certified Staff increase</u>	<u>-\$3,059,934</u>	<u>-\$3,059,934</u>	<u>-2.03%</u>
All other operating line items combined	\$152,186,929	\$1,815,009	1.21%



	Amount	\$ increase	% increase
Board of Education Recommended Budget	\$157,863,623	\$7,491,703	4.98%
Superintendent's Proposed Budget	\$158,613,623	\$8,241,703	5.48%
Reductions (TOTAL)	(\$750,000)		-0.50%
<p>BOE insurance reserve target: 5% to 9% of estimate claims FY27 Gross Medical and Dental est.: \$25,950,340 5%-9% range : \$1.3M - \$2.3M</p> <p>Est. available reserve: \$2.50M Proposed appropriation: \$0.22M Est. Net reserve: \$2.28M (~8.8%)</p>	<p><u>Medical/Rx/Dental Expenditures:</u> FY16: \$14.3M (Actual) FY25: \$20.5M (Actual) 9-Year CAGR: 4.14%</p> <p>FY26: \$22.6M (Budget) 10-Year CAGR: 4.72%</p> <p>FY27: \$25.9M (Budget) 11-Year CAGR: 5.81%</p>		



Board Certified Behavior Analysts - Proposal

CENTER FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CCSN) – Current Model				
FISCAL YEAR	OPERATING BUDGET	GRANTS	TOTAL	FTE
2025	\$256,672	\$160,977	\$417,649	1.2 – 1.4

BOARD CERTIFIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS – Proposed Model				
	OPERATING BUDGET	GRANTS	TOTAL	FTE
BCBA PK-5	\$88,000	-	\$88,000	1.0
BCBA PK-5	\$88,000	-	\$88,000	1.0
BCBA 6-12	-	\$88,000	\$88,000	1.0
Benefits	\$80,000	\$40,000	\$120,000	-
Contracted Svcs.	-	\$80,000	\$80,000	-
TOTAL EST.	\$256,000	\$208,000	\$464,000	3.0



Connections Program – In-House Transportation Proposal

OUTSOURCED TRANSPORTATION – Current Model

FY 2026 Est.: \$207,660 (Operating Budget)

IN-HOUSE TRANSPORTATION – Proposed Model

BOE CARRY OVER ACCOUNT:

Purchase (2) vehicles: \$170,000

OPERATING BUDGET:

Paraeducators – Drivers Extra Hours: \$29,000

Payroll taxes: \$2,219

Maintenance/Inspections/Fuel: \$10,500

Total Est.: \$41,719

Net Savings: \$165,941



Non Certified Staffing - Restructuring Proposal

CURRENT MODEL	
1.0 FTE Health Services Supervisor FY26 Salary: \$182,761 (261 days; \$700 per diem)	
RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL	FACILITIES PROPOSAL (NEW)
Maintain 1.0 FTE Health Services Supervisor Revised: FY27 Salary: \$100,000 (198 days; ~\$500 per diem) Savings: \$82,761	Create 1.0 Asst. Director of Facilities & Security FY27 Salary: \$130,000 Benefits: \$40,000 New Cost: \$170,000
INCREMENTAL COST: \$87,239	



Athletics Uniform Replacement Cycle – Proposal

Annual Replacement – 14 Sports: \$36,500			
Boys Golf	Gymnastics	Girls Squash	
Girls Golf	Boys Water Polo	Boys Tennis	
Boys Swimming & Diving	Girls Water Polo	Girls Tennis	
Girls Swimming & Diving	Boys Squash	Unified Sports (Fall/Winter/Spring)	
Every 4 Years Replacement – 28 Sports: \$234,000 (avg. \$58,500)			
Cheerleading (Fall)	Girls Soccer	Boys Indoor Track	Boys Lacrosse
Cheerleading (Winter)	Boys Volleyball	Girls Indoor Track	Girls Lacrosse
Boys Cross Country	Girls Volleyball	Boys Skiing	Boys Outdoor Track
Girls Cross Country	Boys Basketball	Girls Skiing	Girls Outdoor Track
Field Hockey	Girls Basketball	Wrestling	Boys Rugby
Football	Fencing	Baseball	Girls Ruby
Boys Soccer	Boys Ice Hockey	Softball	Sailing
FY27 Appropriation Request: \$95,000			

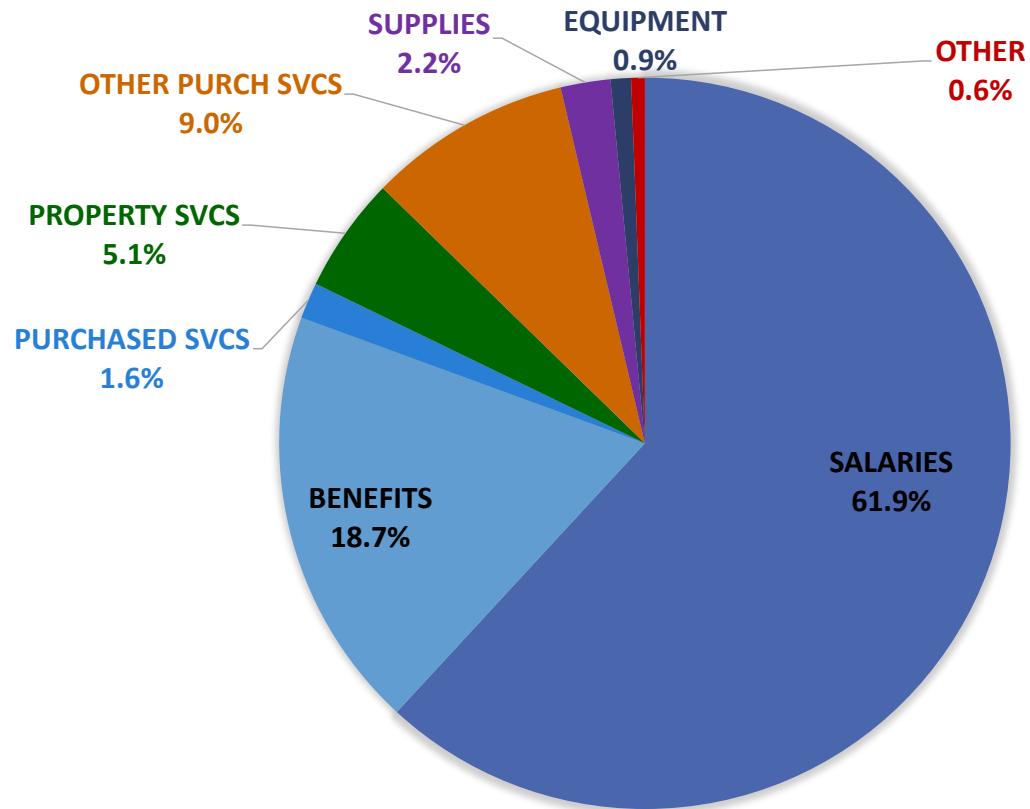


Leadership Team Budget Workshop – Reductions Considered

- **Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP)**
- **Manage Printing Services/Reduce Printers**
- **Reduce Admin Assistant Positions from 12 to 11 months**
- **Phase II Transportation Efficiencies – Change School Start Times**
- **Eliminate Financial Literacy 0.4FTE Request**
- **Access Carryover Account for One Time Equipment Purchases**
- **Teacher Laptops: Lease vs. Purchase**
- **Digital Textbooks**
- **Increased Shared Staff**
- **Tuition Paying Students/Per Pupil Tuition Rate (approx. \$28,000/student)**
- **Facility Rental Opportunities**
- **Charge for Performances (i.e. Athletics, Candlelight, etc.)**
- **Serve as Special Education Provider for Regional Districts – Admit Tuition Paying Students**
- **“Pay to Play” for Student Athletics**
- **BOE Policy – Sponsor Athletic Fields**



Cost Composition FY 2026-2027

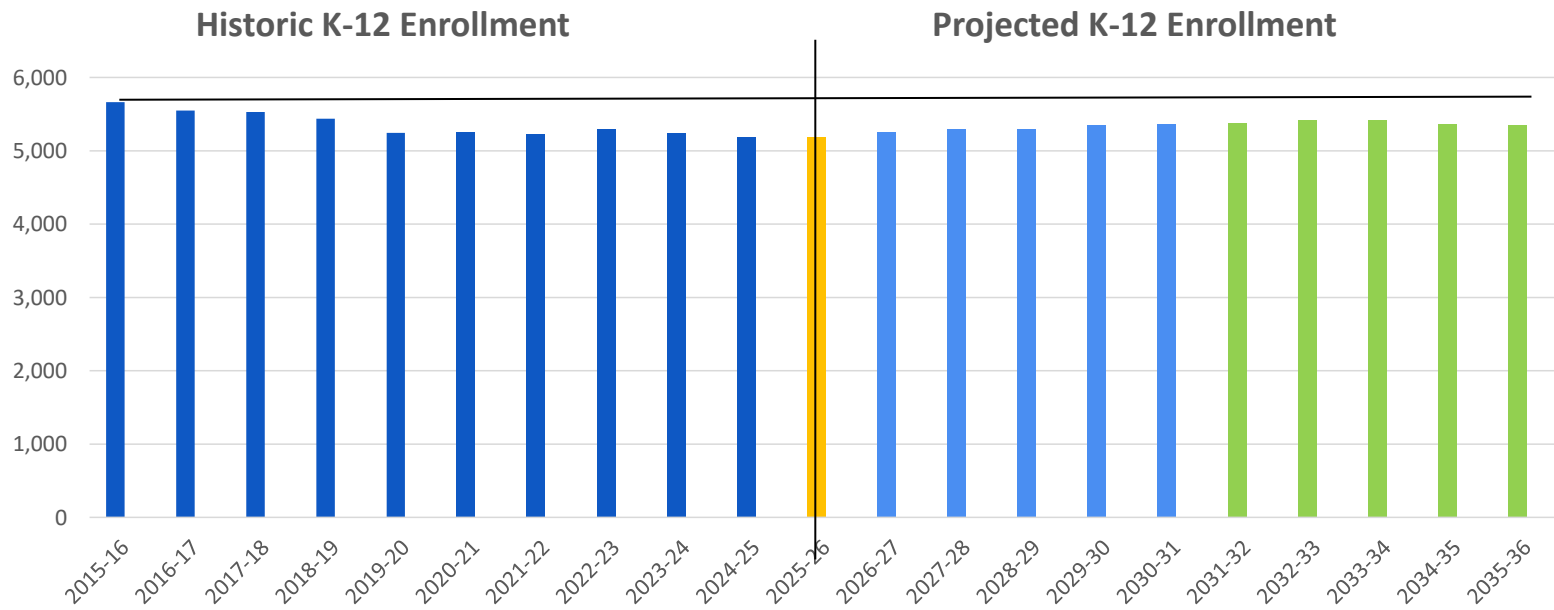


Enrollment Projections

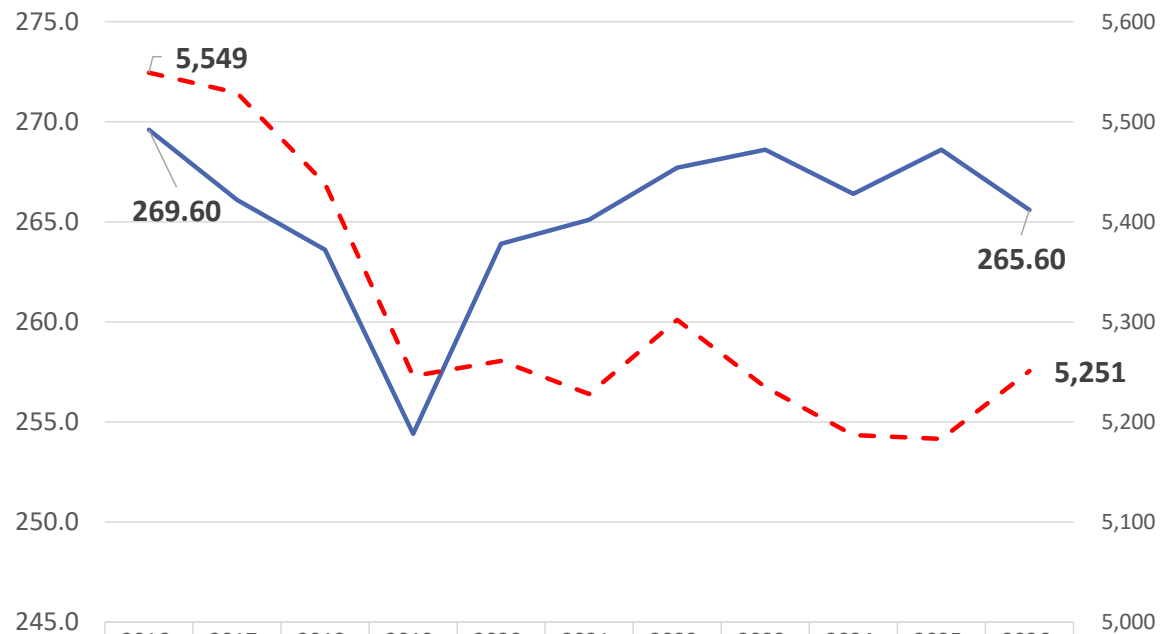
	2025-2026	2026-2027 (Projected)	
K-5	2,363	2,379	+16
6-8	1,195	1,216	+21
9-12	1,625	1,656	+31
Preschool	58	60	+2
Placed Out (K-12)	30	31	+1
TOTAL	5,271	5,342	+71



Districtwide Enrollment



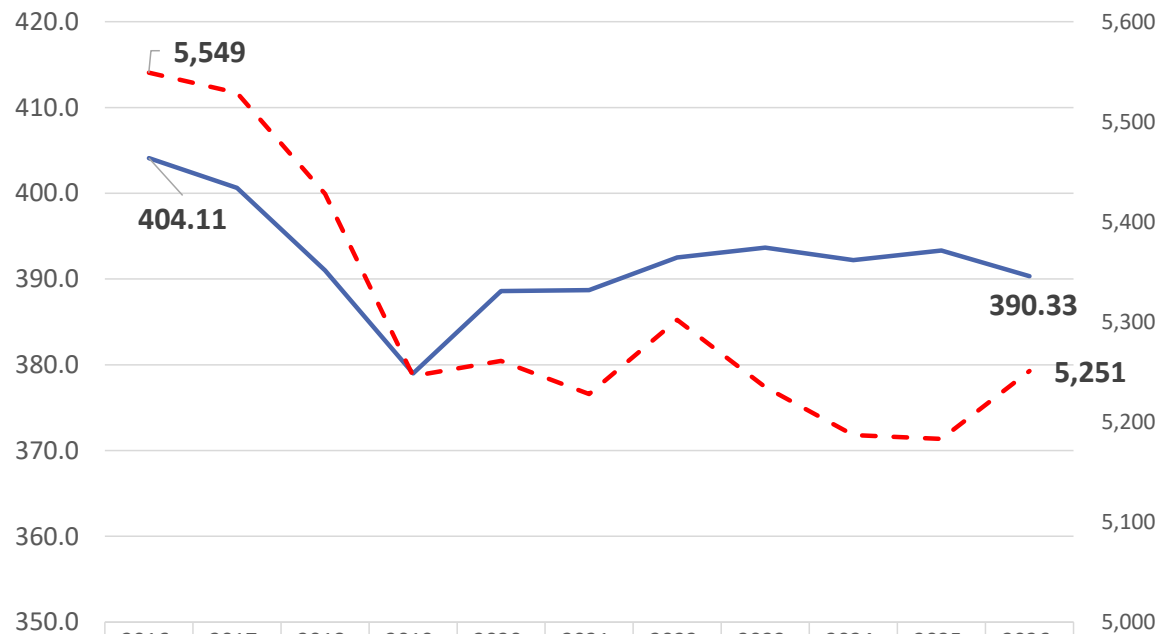
Teachers (FTE) – Regular Education



	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
FTE	269.6	266.1	263.6	254.4	263.9	265.1	267.7	268.6	266.4	268.6	265.6
Enrollment	5,549	5,529	5,438	5,246	5,261	5,228	5,302	5,235	5,187	5,183	5,251



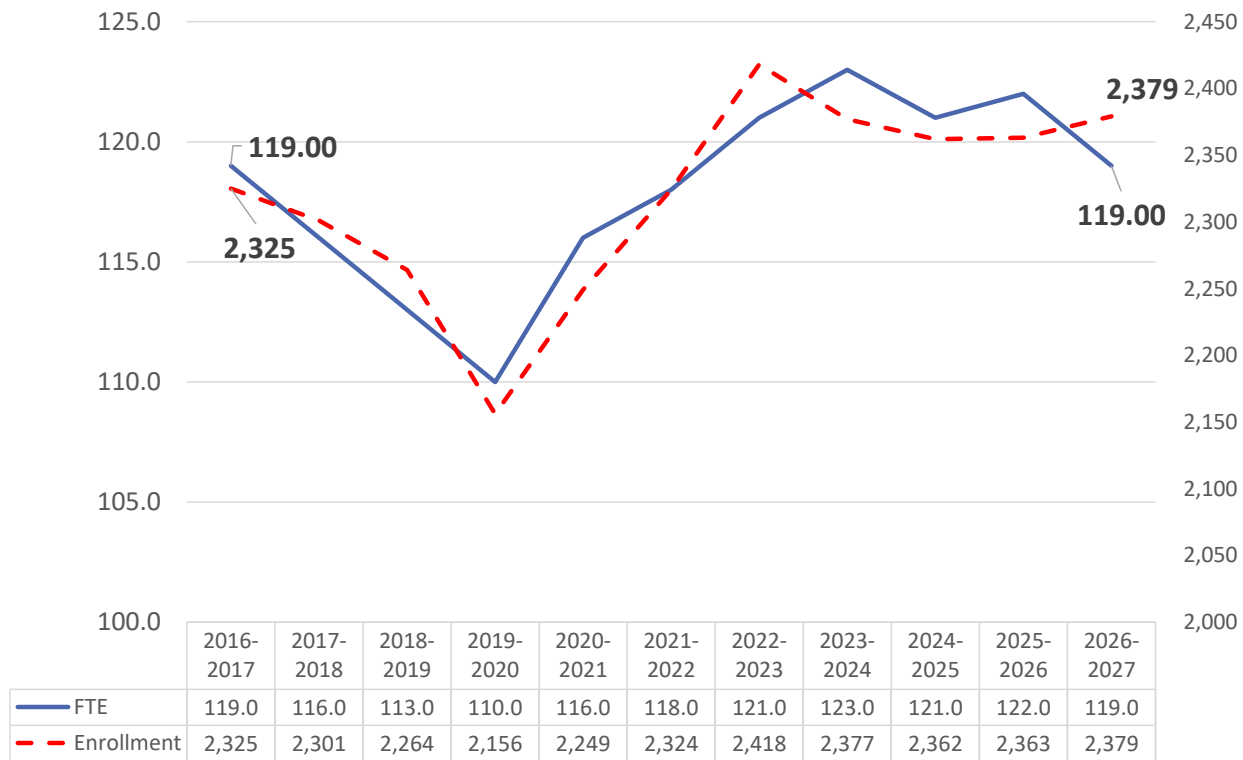
Teachers (FTE) – Regular Education & Special Areas



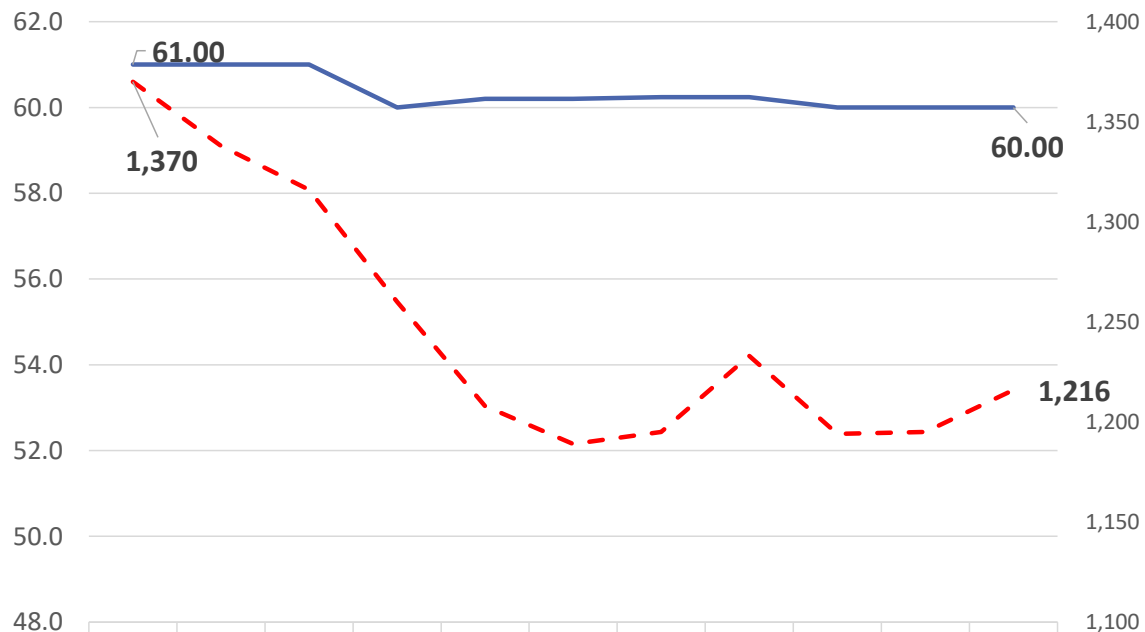
	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
FTE	404.1	400.6	391.0	379.0	388.6	388.7	392.5	393.7	392.2	393.3	390.3
Enrollment	5,549	5,529	5,428	5,246	5,261	5,228	5,302	5,235	5,187	5,183	5,251



Teachers (FTE) – Regular Education - Elementary



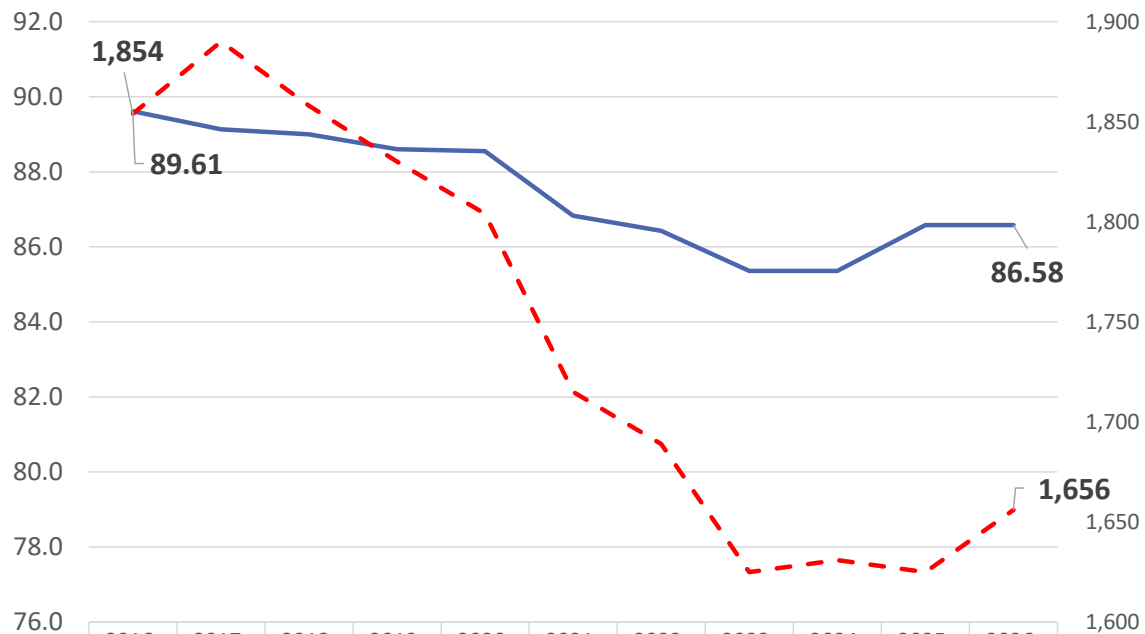
Teachers (FTE) – Regular Education – Middle School



	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
FTE	61.0	61.0	61.0	60.0	60.2	60.2	60.2	60.2	60.0	60.0	60.0
Enrollment	1,370	1,338	1,316	1,260	1,208	1,189	1,195	1,233	1,194	1,195	1,216



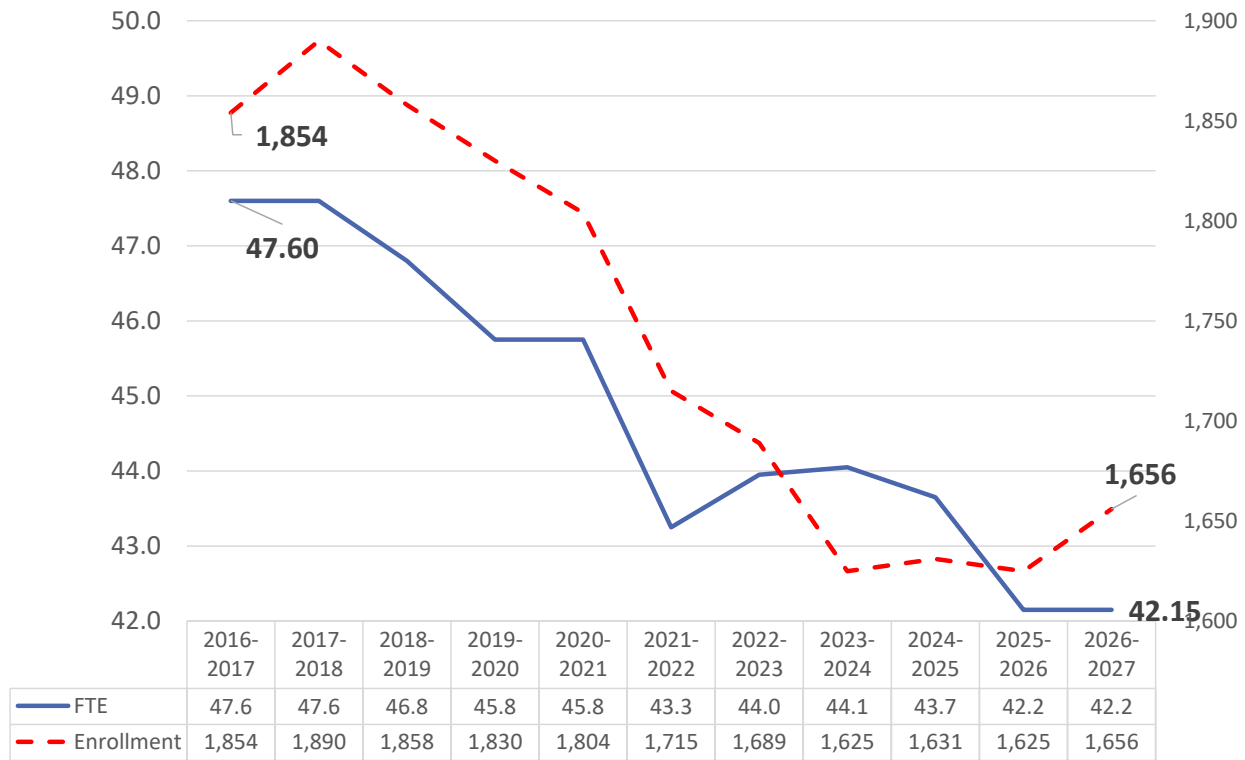
Teachers (FTE) – Regular Education – High School



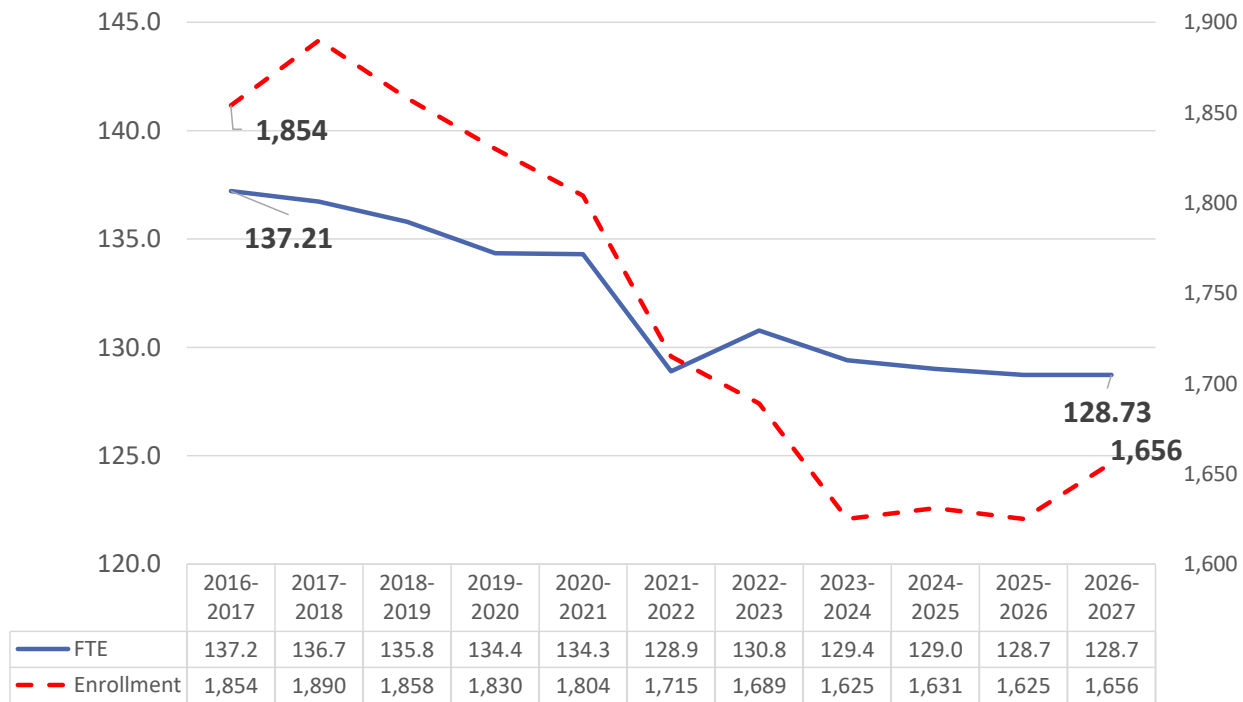
	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
FTE	89.6	89.1	89.0	88.6	88.6	86.8	86.4	85.4	85.4	86.6	86.6
Enrollment	1,854	1,890	1,858	1,830	1,804	1,715	1,689	1,625	1,631	1,625	1,656



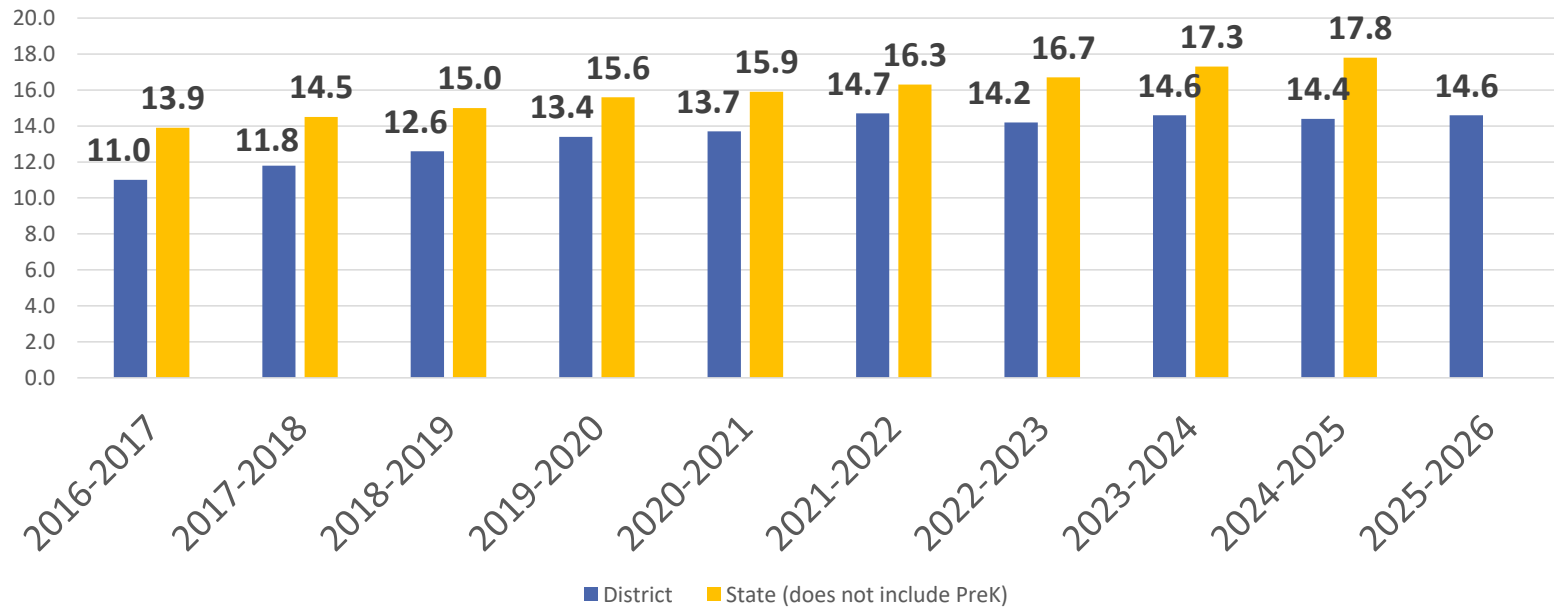
Teachers (FTE) – High School (Special Areas)



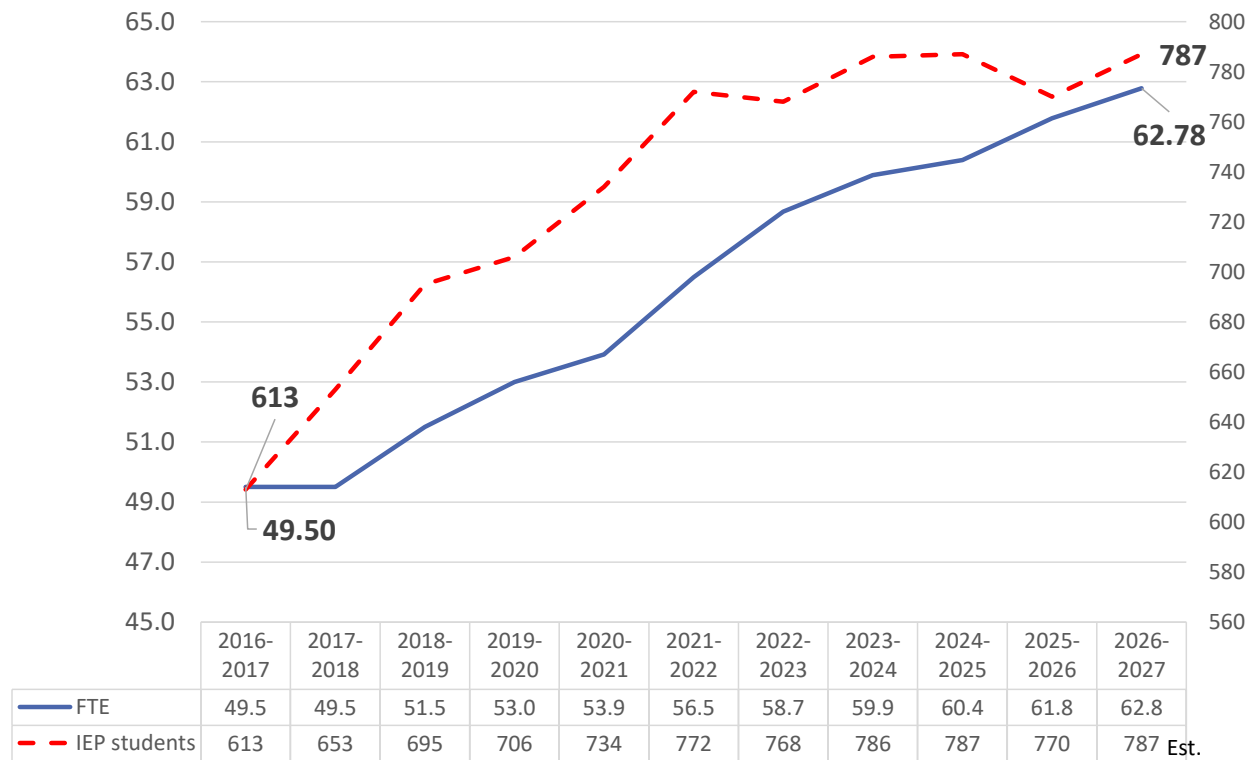
Teachers (FTE) – High School (Reg. Ed & Special Areas)



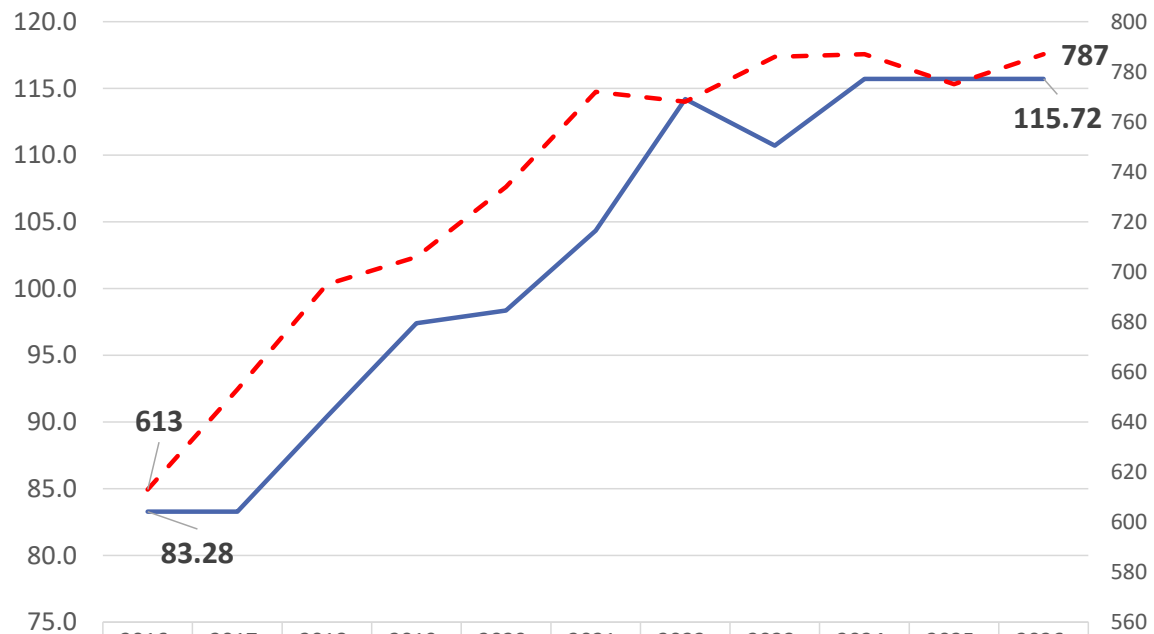
Percentage of Students with Disabilities



Teachers (FTE) – Special Education



Paraeducators (FTE) – Special Education



	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
FTE	83.3	83.3	90.4	97.4	98.4	104.4	114.2	110.7	115.7	115.7	115.7
IEP students	613	653	695	706	734	772	768	786	787	775	787 Est.



Outplacement Tuition Expenditures

Fiscal Year	# of Students	Tuition Expense	Average Tuition	Tuition Exp. Index	Avg. Tuition Index
2020	42	\$2,159,295	\$51,412	100.0	100.0
2021	42	2,690,481	64,059	124.6	124.6
2022*	37	3,083,002	83,324	142.8	162.1
2023*	32	2,469,831	77,182	114.4	150.1
2024**	37	3,716,539	100,447	172.1	195.4
2025	30	3,703,663	123,455	171.5	240.1
2026 (est.)	32	3,870,214	120,944	179.2	235.2
2027 (est.)***	31	4,058,700	130,926	188.0	254.7

* Effective School Solutions (ESS) introduced 9-12

** Effective School Solutions (ESS) introduced 6-8.

*** Effective Schools Solutions (ESS) introduced K-5.

Fiscal Year	\$ Delta	% Delta
2027 (Budget) vs 2026 (Budget)	\$188,486	4.9%



Budget Comparisons – Compound Annual Growth Rate

District (DRG A)	FY 13/14 Budget	FY 25/26 Budget	12 Yr. Growth	FY26 CAGR 12 Yr.	FY27 CAGR 13 Yr.
Westport Public Schools	\$104,177,609	\$150,371,920	44%	3.10%	3.25%
Darien Public Schools	87,714,338	125,760,223	43%	3.05%	
New Canaan Public Schools	77,671,886	113,797,271	47%	3.23%	
Ridgefield Public Schools	82,029,557	119,796,000	46%	3.21%	
Weston Public Schools	45,575,418	61,151,439	34%	2.48%	
Wilton Public Schools	76,457,070	96,968,334	27%	<u>2.00%</u>	
			Median:	3.08%	
Westport BOE Budget	FY 25/26 Budget		FY26/27 Proposed		Growth
Total Certified Salaries	\$71,867,205		\$74,927,139		4.30%
% of total budget	47.8%		47.2%		



FYE Balances – Funds returned to Town

Fiscal Year	Funds returned to Town	% of Budget
2017	\$390,000	0.34%
2018	151,205	0.13%
2019	43,044	0.04%
2020*	616,805	0.52%
2021 (release of BOE COA funds)	675,000	0.55%
2021	887,568	0.73%
2022	268,481	0.21%
2023	972,673	0.75%
2024	636,862	0.47%
2025	<u>289,446</u>	0.20%
TOTAL	\$4,931,084	



Tuition Receipts – Transferred to Town

Fiscal Year	Tuition Receipts	% of Budget
2017	\$136,666	0.12%
2018	157,337	0.14%
2019	168,247	0.14%
2020	216,755	0.18%
2021	255,534	0.21%
2022	246,422	0.20%
2023	305,768	0.24%
2024	286,079	0.21%
2025	<u>392,260</u>	0.27%
TOTAL	\$2,165,068	



Education Cost Sharing Grant – Direct Payment to Town

Fiscal Year	ECS Amount	% of Budget
2017	\$454,422	0.40%
2018	380,517	0.33%
2019	493,831	0.42%
2020	526,903	0.45%
2021	588,050	0.48%
2022	560,319	0.45%
2023	474,063	0.37%
2024	697,600	0.51%
2025	<u>589,729</u>	0.41%
TOTAL	\$4,765,434	



Percent of Annual Budget Credited Back to Town

Fiscal Year	Funds Returned	Tuition Receipts	Education Cost Sharing Grant	TOTAL PERCENT CREDITED BACK
2017	0.34%	0.12%	0.40%	0.86%
2018	0.13%	0.14%	0.33%	0.60%
2019	0.04%	0.14%	0.42%	0.60%
2020	0.52%	0.18%	0.45%	1.15%
2021	1.28%	0.21%	0.48%	1.97%
2022	0.21%	0.20%	0.45%	0.86%
2023	0.75%	0.24%	0.37%	1.36%
2024	0.47%	0.21%	0.51%	1.19%
2025	0.20%	0.27%	0.41%	0.88%
			Mean	1.05%
			Median	0.88%





Q&A

2026-2027 BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDED BUDGET

RTM-FINANCE APRIL 21, 2026

**RTM Finance Committee Meeting
The Board of Education 2026-2027 Operating and Ancillary Budgets
April 21, 2026 via Zoom**

On Tuesday, April 21st, the RTM Finance Committee met to consider the Westport Board of Education’s (“BOE”) 2026-2027 Operating Budget of **\$157,863,623**, an overall increase of **\$4.98%**. In addition to the Operating Budget, two other ancillary budgets were presented. They are:

- a. BOE Program Expenses of \$249,326 (Stepping Stones)
- b. Aid to Private Schools of \$576,577 (Greens Farm Academy, Pierrepont School)

In attendance for the RTM Finance Committee:

Seth Braunstein – Chairman
Joe Carson, Jill Grayson, Nancy Kail, Pam Kopack, Melissa Levy, Charles Lucas

For the Board of Education and School District:

Lee Goldstein – BOE Chair
Thomas Scarice - Superintendent of Schools
Elio Longo – Chief Financial Officer
Anna Mahon – Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning
Michael Rizzo – Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services
John Bayers – Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and General Administration

Others in Attendance:

RTM Members Adam Drake, Jimmy Izzo and Jack Klinge

Meeting Materials: BOE Presentation – [LINK](#)

Budget Philosophy:

The proposed 2026-27 budget reflects a 4.98% budget increase. The budget prioritizes maintaining district quality for our premier district, preserving services, and investing in student support while managing long-term cost pressures, particularly healthcare. Education is a people business and over 80% of the operating budget is devoted to personnel and benefits.

The budget includes several program improvements at low or no additional cost, including bringing Board Certified Behavior Analysts (“BCBA”) in-house, expanding the Connections program for special needs students with in-house transportation, hiring an Assistant Facilities Director at reduced cost through a retirement restructuring, and expanding ESS services to elementary schools.

Major Cost Drivers:

Healthcare costs are a big driver of the increase, adding approximately \$2.6M. Contractual salary increases account for an additional \$3M. After removing these, remaining growth is about 1.2%.

Budget Process:

The BOE Chair, Superintendent and CFO discussed the budget process. It begins in October/November with budget discussion/requests by cost center administrators. The CFO then sends the proposed budget to the Superintendent and full administrative team for further refinement. After further discussions and keeping in mind strategic priorities, the Superintendent's budget is presented to the BOE for approval. Once approved/amended by the BOE, the budget is presented to the BOF and RTM for approval. More detail on the budget process and timeline is shown in the BOE Recommended 2026-27 budget.

The budget identifies current services, changes due to enrollment and changes due to programs. Within all three phases, the current services budget is defined as all staff that are employed as of this year, and all current programs rolled forward with contractual obligations.

Strategic Cost Management:

The final budget does not include everything that was requested by staff or the superintendent. Forced choices are made with consideration of known non-negotiable increases (health care, contracted services). Items not included in the budget are presented to the board, so they are aware of items requested/considered but not included.

The Finance Committee discussed these changes (see list pg. 13 of BOE Recommended Budget package) indicating support of some (like sponsoring athletic fields), and the Superintendent went through each item, explaining why it was or was not included in this year's budget. See appendix for more details.

Enrollment Changes:

Enrollment levels generated a decrease of 3.0 FTEs in the elementary schools and an increase of 1.0 special education FTE at BMS. See appendix for a detailed discussion of enrollment projections.

Program Improvements/Changes:

Three special education and one personnel restructuring changes were proposed:

- Hire three Board Certified Behavior Analysts ("BCBA") in house instead of utilizing a consulting model. Federal IDEA grants would provide funding for one BCBA. The overall impact on the budget is flat, as reduced consulting expenses and IDEA federal grants cover the expense changes.

- Transportation Connections program – In an effort to reduce outsourced transportation for students in this program (ages 18 – 22), the BOE will purchase 2 vehicles (\$170k from carryover account) and train special education paraeducators to drive the vehicles and transport students to Fairfield University and work sites throughout town. Additional para salaries and benefits and maintenance/fuel will generate \$165k savings in the first year. In addition to cost savings, by providing our own vehicles and drivers, Westport students receive enhanced flexibility and service across their school day experience.
- Effective School Solutions (“ESS”) is a program that is being spread through the schools to provide acute clinical services in house and reduce the need for special education students being placed out of the district. The program began at the high school in 2022 and spread to the middle schools in 2024. The program will be introduced to elementary schools next year. Keeping students in house is a win-win for parents and the school system.
- Restructuring Health Services/Hiring Assistant Director of Facilities – For several years, adding an Assistant Director of Facilities has been on the administrations wish list. When the full-time Health Services Supervisor retired, the position was restructured and utilized lower per diem rates and days. The administration worked with nursing staff and benchmarked other districts to ensure needs of students would continue to be well served. Ultimately there was a savings of \$83k from this restructuring. This partially offset the creation of the Assistant of Facilities & Security (Salary \$130k; Benefits \$40k) position. This brings the incremental cost of these personnel adjustments to \$87k.

Healthcare:

Healthcare costs in the state plan were initially projected to increase 15% but were reduced to 11.5% with a 1% Fairfield County surcharge, leading to a decision to use \$220,000 from the healthcare reserve to keep the overall increase at 4.98%. More detail on healthcare is in the appendix.

Other Changes:

An opportunity to reduce textbook replacement saved \$83k. Offsetting that is the replacement of equipment for the facilities department (25-year-old truck and other cleaning equipment). These total costs of \$170k will be covered by the carryover account.

Up to now, athletic uniforms for sports teams were largely funded by boosters. This leads to inequities between sports depending on the boosters. The superintendent stated that these are basic requirements to offer a program. Working with the athletic director, an approach was recommended to the board to include the purchase of athletic uniforms through the board's education budget.

Comparisons/Other:

The CFO discussed comparison of our budget to others in our DRG. With a look back to fiscal year 14, compared to the current budget year, fiscal year 2026 shows a 12-year growth of 44%. On a compounding basis, for 12 years, we see an average compound increase of 3.1%. Five districts that are partners within DIRG A have a median increase of 3.08%. Westport's operating budget over the course of 12 years has an average of 3.25%, and we operate at the median.

While not a revenue generator, if the district closes the fiscal operating year with a surplus those funds will be returned to the Town of Westport. From 2017 to 2025, approximately \$4.9 million has been returned to the town. By returning funds to town, when the BOE needs it, they can reach into the reserves.

Finance Committee Questions:

Health Care Reserve - Finance committee members asked questions about whether healthcare reserve was an interest-bearing account (was not but is now). There was also support by several members to not utilize the health care reserve and to come in with a 5.3% budget increase. The Superintendent explained that the decision to use reserve funds was made after thorough discussion at both the BOE and BOF.

Demographics: We also discussed demographic changes due to additional complexes apartment being built in town. Birth rates and preschool enrollment are part of the process used to determine enrollment projections and demographers are aware of real estate trends and building.

Special education outplacement costs: These increases are the result of both inflation and the need for more intensive programming at some of the residential facilities. Committee members asked about grant funding sustainability, particularly regarding IDEA grants for special education and received confirmation that these grants are federal and appear to continue to be sustainable.

2026-2027 Budget Approval:

The Finance Committee reviewed and approved the proposed Board of Education budget for 2026-2027, with all seven committee members voting in favor.

The committee also unanimously approved two supplemental budgets: \$576,570 for private schools (Green Farms Academy and Pierpont School) and \$400,168 for the Stepping Stones preschool program.

The 2026-27 BOE Recommended Budget is attached as Appendix A. Detailed explanation of many of the subjects discussed is attached in Appendix B.

Appendix B:

Detailed explanation of items discussed at the 4/21/26 RTM Finance and BOE meeting.
Summary in RTM Finance report.

Budget Process

The superintendent and school CFO explained that every administrator that oversees a cost center will meet with the CFO and the central office team in the months of October and November with their recommendations. The CFO accumulates an overall operating budget. In December the entire team meets (Superintendent, Central Office, Administrators, CFO) and ultimately make recommendations to the Board of Ed.

Within all three phases, the current services budget is defined as all staff that are employed as of this year, and all current programs rolled forward with contractual obligations

District administration makes forced choices, and do their best to make sure that the board is not just getting an all-in budget. Requests that are identified but not included in the current budget are presented to the BOE to ensure they are aware of these items in case they have a different opinion.

Enrollment projections

We are looking at modest increases and not going out more than 5 years as it's hard to project beyond that time. Gaps between teacher and student levels increase/decrease depending on timing and grade level. Regular education = Classroom teachers at Elementary schools and English, Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science at the middle schools. Regular education and special "encore" areas include PE, art, music, world languages.

Elementary regular teachers depend on where kids are in both physical location and grade level. Class size for K – 2 is 22; 3rd thru 5th – 25. Currently we have 122 sections between all 5 elementary schools; being reduced to 119 next year. Middle school staffing requires staff for 2 sections at CMS and 3 sections at BMS so enrollment changes at the middle school level likely won't change staffing due to team approach and larger classes moving up from elementary schools. High school gap between enrollment and FTEs is decreasing somewhat, but more in encore subjects than in regular education.

Demographics:

The district is currently at the bottom end of enrollment with this year's graduating senior class. When a baby is born in Westport, it is highly likely they're going to come to school for kindergarten 5 years later, and there is some migration at other ages. Other considerations are the affordability of Westport and what kind of housing is being built in Westport. The district is now beginning to talk with our demographer about apartment/condo complexes being built in town.

The demographer currently researches all the public records that are available but also works with local realtors to get information on families moving to town. They also work with the central office to gather information from all preschools in the areas. He is aware of and considering both the Riverhouse (85 Post Road West near Kings Highway School) and The Villages at Saugatuck (44 Hiawatha Lane) in assessing impact on school enrollment.

The BOE is also watching closely and will be considered in Phase II of redistricting. Neither complex has been assigned to schools yet. The Superintendent is concerned that we might be underestimating the appetite for a family to live in smaller quarters than historically we would. So, for a one-bedroom or a two-bedroom apartment, families are finding ways to make it work both for affordability and because they want to get their kids in the Westport Public Schools.

Special Education Identification/Staffing:

Identification rate for special education students is approximately 14.4% of all students compared to the state rate of 17.8%. This is approximately 775 – 800 students PreK thru 22. Disabilities include reading and learning disabilities, ADHD, autism and emotional disabilities. Stability and identification rates over time highlight the strength of a system, both regular education and special education working together to make sure that students' needs are met across the system, and when they need support, that the district is able to identify what that is and provide that support.

Staffing for special education teaching staff increases 1.0 FTE for one of our intensive programs at Bedford Middle School. Overall FTES for Special Education have increased proportionately with the increase in special education students. Paraeducator staffing levels have leveled off as student population has remained somewhat consistent. Our paraeducators are very, very valuable members of our teams. We are using the staff efficiently; we're addressing student needs.

Board Certified Behavior Analysts:

The district is planning to bring in house three board certified behavior analysts in lieu of using a consulting model. Board-certified behavior analysts support students with complex behavioral needs, provide district-wide support to some of our more intensive programs, work with teachers implementing behavior plans, and essentially will assist us in building capacity across our schools to address social, emotional, behavioral needs.

At the beginning of the school year, the Superintendent and staff identified certain headwinds that exist as a school system. Behavioral and emotional regulation is one of those headwinds and this initiative and budget was developed to help address that.

In fiscal year 2025, through both the operating budget and federal grants, the district spent approximately \$420,000 on consulting services for BCBAs, and that provided the district 1.2 to 1.4 FTEs. In this budget, through operating funds and grants, the FTE count will double to 3.0 FTE for essentially the same amount of money.

This addition of in-house staff will allow the district to serve all students and teachers within all 9 schools. Currently, under the consulting model, the program operates in approximately 5 schools. One of the other impetuses for bringing this model in-house is that the requests from the schools that don't typically have BCBA support are getting more and more frequent, so this is going to allow the district to address emerging needs. The budget also provides clinical supervision for the two in-house individuals to maintain certifications and utilize best practices.

Grants:

Grants the district takes advantage of are largely entitlement grants. The largest amount of is within special education through IDEA grants. There are also Title 1 grants for free and reduced lunch students, Title II grants for innovative programming, Title III to partner with regional districts for English Language learners and Title IV for health and wellness. All grants are based on formulas. There are also other competitive grants but the wealth factor in our district makes it challenging to obtain and there isn't bandwidth within the district to pursue these grants.

Out-of-town Special Education

The district is responsible for educating students with special education needs. Approximately 96% of our students are served either in their home schools or programs that serve students across the schools, such as intensive resources, connections programs and the like. When a student's needs cannot be met in our brick and mortar school system, they are placed in approved private special education schools where their needs can be met and programs implemented.

In the year 2020, there were approximately 42 students that required placement outside of the district. Through the introduction of various programs, specifically Effective School Solutions, these students were provided essentially therapeutic day school programming within our school system. This has curtailed some of the outplacements, met student needs in the district, kept them in their home schools, among their peers, working with our highly qualified staff and having the benefit of the Westport Public School system opportunities like extracurriculars and other programs.

Average tuition for out-of-district placements has increased and overall cost is partially offset by bringing some students in-house to utilize expanded in-district programs. The average tuition index over the course of 7 years is up 155%, while for the same time period, the tuition expenditure account is up 88%. This is the district's attempt to bend the cost curve with the introduction of effective school solutions.

When appropriate, outsourced students will be brought back into the school system if the services needed are available in house. Many students will graduate through our system. The district works closely with the school the student is in, the student and the student's family to facilitate a successful return to the district that meets the students' needs.

A more restrictive component of special education services is a residential placement. This is where a student lives at and attends a residential school and comes home on very short and scheduled breaks. The nature of residential placement is that the needs of the student are inextricably intertwined with their environment, and therefore they need to be in that environment full-time to make meaningful progress. Those placements are more expensive. These placements work with the social, emotional, behavioral regulation and the family needs that are seen. One of the reasons why Effective School Solutions has been so effective is because they do extensive family work. They meet with families outside of the school day, doing counseling and therapeutic sessions with families. Sometimes that's not enough, even with that amount of support, and the district looks at residential placements.

Healthcare:

Over the last 4 years there have been 2 healthcare working groups (BOE, BOF and RTM members) that have evaluated the plans and options. Three years ago, the district changed to the State health insurance plan from private insurance. That necessitated renegotiating with 7 different bargaining units, but provided large cost savings. The question remains "should we go to self-insured"? This summer the district will be renegotiating teacher contracts and be at the end of the state partnership agreement term.

The first budget increase for healthcare was 15%; at that point, the BOE recommended taking \$750k out of the healthcare reserve. The reserve is only necessary when you are self-insured. Target reserves should be between 5 – 9% of the healthcare budget. Reserve was at 9%. BOF had mixed feelings about taking the reserve. On the day of the next BOF meeting, the state Comptroller's office gave us a 12.5% increase instead. (Actual rate is 11.5% plus the 1% Fairfield County surcharge that all schools in Fairfield County are assessed.) BOE then reduced the amount taken from the reserve to \$220k. This keeps the reserve at 8.8% should the BOE change to a self-insured health insurance model in the upcoming year.

Health Service Restructuring/Assistant Facilities Director;

An opportunity to restructure health services this year when the Health Services Supervisor retired. The position had been a 12 month one for many years. Administration spoke with nursing staff and determined the hours could be reduced from 261 to 198 days. Also, a lower per diem rate is attainable while still meeting the needs of the district for savings of \$83k. Research was done to ensure that the change does not diminish any of the work that's done in that role, but just restructures it, and are very confident about what will happen moving forward. This helped to offset the creation of the Assistant of Facilities & Security (Salary \$130k; Benefits \$40k). Incremental cost of these personnel adjustments net to \$87k.

Rationale for Assistant Facilities Director

This position has been under consideration for 3 years. The need to evaluate and maintain all buildings in the district is critical. The district brought in Collier project leaders to identify facility strategy for all buildings. There are many ordinary maintenance and capital projects, including LLS. This taxes the time of Director of Facilities due to the sheer number and complexity of the projects and to ensure the quality of the work performed. Timing is also a consideration as it takes coordination and planning to perform maintenance or complete projects while school is not in session. During April break around 100 maintenance projects were completed.

Tuition receipts :

When a seat is available in a classroom, that seat is offered to students of our employees as long as it doesn't trigger an additional FTE. The employee pays 25% of the per pupil rate (currently \$28k). If said student requires any special education services, those are paid for a la carte by the employee. Per state statute, all tuition receipts are collected by the business office and are immediately turned over to the Town of Westport Department of Finance. Between 2017 and 2025, a total of \$2.2million was redeemed to the town.

In-house transportation - Transitions:

These students go to Fairfield University, work sites through town and are currently transported by the First Student> Select paraprofessionals are becoming licensed to drive these students with vehicles the district is purchasing. Better for the kids and will be a good pilot program is we want to move more special education transportation in house. Additional salaries (\$29k), benefits (\$2.2k), maintenance, inspections and fuel (\$10.5k) add \$41k to the budget but provides a net savings of approximately \$166k.

This change has been under consideration and was benchmarked with other school districts throughout the state. From a budget perspective, special education transportation has increased significantly over the past 5 to 10 years. Through research, an opportunity was identified to begin in-house, in a small way with the Transition program for 18 – 22-year-old students. The district will be purchasing two 8 – 10-person accessible vehicles through the carryover accounts.

The district is working in partnership with First Student who is assisting with the maintenance, inspections, and fuel, and the district has been able to partner with them on this initiative. Several staff members now going through the certification process to obtain a Class V license. A small example of the kind of partnerships that we've come to enjoy here in Westport.

Part of the licensure involves a medical examination, and there's certain medical examiners, physicians that are on this list. One of those individuals was somebody in our school community and her office is conducting those medical examinations for staff to help through that process smoothly.

REDUCTIONS CONSIDERED BY ADMINISTRATION:

Included in Budget:

Eliminate .4 FTE Financial Literacy – Did eliminate and redistributed the workload to other teachers.

Access carryover account for one time equipment purchase - Did this for Facility purchases (\$170k)

Not included in Budget:

Early retirement – To be successful, you need the right cohort of teachers hitting a certain timeline in their careers. Analyzed and it's not the right time; could actually cost money instead of savings.

Printers -managing and reducing printing and printing services. Printers are available for teachers across the building and rooms. This would be a significant change without a huge savings.

Reduce Admin Asst from 12 – 11 months – Lots of work happens in the summer when the kids aren't there.

Phase II Transportation efficiencies – Change school start times. Not ready yet; reduced some buses last year. Next phase is changing school start times.

Laptops – Lease vs. purchasing – didn't make financial sense

Digital textbooks – Did utilize for some textbooks but the district is in the middle of screen time analysis so need to balance textbooks vs. screens.

Tuition Paying Students – Wilton has a policy where a student from another town can apply for admissions and pay our rate (\$28k). Rate is our per pupil rate; BOE could set higher or lower and a debate on whether we want to entertain.

Facility rental rates and Charge for Performances – Could increase rates/charge but small incremental savings/revenue and hard to think of schools as revenue generators.

Regional Special Education provider – Admit tuition paying special education students from other towns. We have a couple of district-wide programs, one that serves our autism spectrum students. We have a growing program in the ESS program that addresses our students with profound emotional needs. These are programs that other smaller districts might not have the opportunity to provide for their kids, so they're forced to outplace their kids with those types of needs in very expensive private facilities

Student Athletics "Pay to Play" – No appetite for that.

Sponsor Athletic Fields – This would require a BOE policy change.

RTM Education Committee Meeting
March 25, 2026

On March 25, 2026, members of the RTM Education Committee met in person in Town Hall to discuss and vote on the Board of Education's FY 2026-2027 operating budget, totaling \$157,863,623.

Members Present:

Education Committee - Lauren Karpf, Brandi Briggs, Lou Mall, Kristin Purcell, Alma Sarelli, Rachel Cohn (for discussion only).

Others Present:

Tom Scarice, Lee Goldstein, Elio Longo, Mike Rizzo, John Bayers, Anna Mahon, Pam Kopack, Andrew Colabella.

Background:

By way of background, the Administration presented its budget to the Superintendent of approximately \$158,895,658 or a 5.67% increase. Superintendent Scarice presented his budget to the BOE of approximately \$158,613,623 or a 5.48% increase. The BOE brought its budget of approximately \$157,863,623 or a 4.98% increase to the BOF, where it was approved unanimously.

Discussion:

Lee Goldstein and the Administration presented the operating budget. The 4.98% increase is largely due to increased health insurance costs, comprising approximately 1.74% of the 4.98% increase. Contractual salary increases account for an additional 2.03% of the increase. Excluding health insurance costs and salary increases, the budget increase amounts to 1.21%.

The district utilizes the state partnership plan for health insurance. These costs have risen to a 12.5% rate this upcoming year, including a 1% Fairfield County surcharge. The BOE keeps a health insurance reserve fund, which will be used when/if the district returns to a self funded health insurance model. That fund, by policy, is 5-9% of health care costs. The reserve was at the very top of the range, and the board allocated \$220,907 to bring down some of the operating budget costs. The reserve remains at 8.8%

Enrollment is projected to increase by around 71 students during 2026-2027. However, the number of elementary teachers is expected to decrease by 3 positions, with the entire budget including an increase of only 1.4 full time employees. Other factors in the budget increase this year include special education costs, including a high number of students with complex needs. Approximately 14% of our students requires special education services, amounting to approximately 775 students.

The budget also includes two additional behavior analysts to support staff in working with students with social emotional and complex behavioral needs. This change in bringing behavior analysts in-house improves efficiency across all schools and allows the district to proactively address emerging needs. It will double the number of work hours performed without an increase in cost.

An additional position added to the budget is the Assistant Facilities Director. This position was included in the Superintendent's budget in prior years, but had not been approved by the BOE. This year, however, the district was able to restructure staffing within the health services department to partially offset this cost. The Assistant Facilities Director will help to oversee school maintenance and capital projects.

Another budgetary driver is outplacement of students whose needs cannot be met in the district. While our ESS program (Effective School Solutions) has successfully served students within the district and provided countless benefits to those students, it is not appropriate for all students. The cost of outplacement has risen as tuition at relevant private schools has more than doubled in the past five years.

The district is seeking other opportunities to cut costs, including the purchase of two passenger vans to transport Connections students to work sites and other locations. These costs will be covered by funds from the carryover account. Staff members are currently undergoing training to obtain the appropriate licenses. Bringing the transportation in-house will produce significant cost savings for the district.

Other topics we discussed included transportation to practices and games for all sports (ie: squash); Phase 2 of redistricting for elementary schools; the recent security audit; tuition from teachers' children attending WPS (revenue goes directly back to the town); differences between state reporting and WPS reporting in regard to special education (ie: District includes pre-k in its reporting while the state does not) and differences in grant reporting. Committee members thanked the BOE and Administration for their tireless work over the past year, and for a clear and in-depth presentation.

We also had an extensive discussion about the capital plan, including the process for requests and approvals, communication with the BOF and RTM, and upcoming projects. We agreed that the Education Committee would meet with the BOE and administration 1-2 times per year to review the capital plan.

Some of the items we discussed include:

Coleytown Elementary School - We have known for some time that extensive work is needed at CES. As just one example, this year, two classrooms suffered from leaks, requiring students to relocate from the classroom. The administration and BOE have asked the First Selectman to

form a building committee for CES and hope to begin testing and studies of the building within the year.

Five year plan - The five year forecast through 2029 is online. It is also part of the master plan for the town. In general, the schedule for non-emergency facilities projects is for the Finance and Facilities Committee to vote in early September, the BOE later in September, the BOF in October, the RTM in November, and work is completed over the summer.

Current projects - Staples Auditorium (should be done by September), a personal duress system funded through the carryover account, improved wireless access points, the Staples team meeting room, a master plan for Staples fields, the GFS roof, and BMS science labs.

At the May 7 BOE meeting, Colliers will update the BOE on the capital plan.

Vote:

Lou Mall motion a motion to approve the FY 2026-2027 budget of \$157,863,623, Alma Sarelli seconded that motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Kristin Purcell made a motion to approve the private school assistance budget of \$576,577. Brandi Briggs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Brandi Briggs made a motion to approve the Revenue offset of \$400,169: Alma Sarelli seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by:
Lauren Karpf
Chair, RTM Education Committee