

Questions regarding the BOE budget for 26-27

1. 100.1000.561.1.10: How many students are enrolled in the magnet program ? **There are currently two students enrolled.** Is it an estimate for the coming school year or is it subject to change? **The assumption is that the two students will continue next year, however, that is subject to change.**

2. I see that under most of the categories there is a "Dues and Fees" line item. Do you know what these are? **These are typically registration or membership fees.**
 1. 100.1000.810.00.1.11 - Dues and Fees - Student - What type of activity is recorded in this account? **These funds are exclusively for the robotics program offered to our students. Funds are for membership and competitions.** Can the \$6K be reduced? **Yes, if the Board eliminates the robotics program.**
 2. 100.2310.810.00.1.10 Dues and Fees: Please provide a brief description of what these dues and fees are for. **CABE membership(Connecticut Association of Boards of Education), CT REAP membership (Regional Education Applicant Placement), CAPSS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents), NESDEQ (New England School Development Council), ConCase(This is a group for Directors of Pupil Services)**
 3. **School Dues and Fees: NELMS(New England League of Middle Schools), CAS(CT Association of Schools), CIAC(Sports fee), League fee for area sports, NAESP(National Association of School Principals, ASCD(Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, LeadNow (National Membership for District and School Leaders), EdWeek Publications**
 4. **The transportation dues and fees allow us to access state training for our drivers. They are mandated to meet certain requirements.**

These memberships allow collaboration with state and national leadership. This allows the administrators to stay up to date on best practices not only throughout the country and the state. For a small district it allows for opportunities to gather ideas from other rural districts.

3. Under Support Staff - 2100 there is a line item for Outsourced OT. There was no previous budget for this and this year they are asking for \$69,000. Do you know what this is for?

Our COTA (Occupational Therapist Assistant) had to leave for a year due to schooling and our OTR(Occupational Therapist Registered) retired. We had to outsource it for one year and this is what the contract will cost us to cover the services for the 2026/2027 school year. And why is it such a large amount? This is a highly specialized special education service.

4. Under the Principal's Office, there are what appear to be three Principals. Do you know the roles of each of these employees? **There is one Principal and one Assistant**

Principal. Why are there 3? Under office staff-principal: 100.2400.110.30.1.10: This is two clerical positions: One full time 12 month employee and one is part-time 10 month employee.

5. Under Business Office there is a line item for Business Manager and a separate line item for Office Staff Business with approximately the same salary. Do you know what these two roles are and how they are different?

These two clerical staff, one is the Accounts Payable person who is a .6 employee. She manages all ordering and payment to all of our vendors. The other person is a .8 payroll position. She manages payroll and benefits for all employees for the BOE. Both of these positions are overseen by our Business Manager who is also .8 position.

6. In my experience Apple products have always been more expensive than other IT products (HP, Lenovo, etc). The High Schools use Lenovo chromebooks. I saw item 17 where they explain why the school uses Apple devices, however I'm struggling to understand why things like a "vast App Store" or "premium build" is relevant. Are there specific apps that are being used that are not available from another source?

Answer from our Technology Services:

Today most schools choose between two device ecosystems; Apple (iPad) and Google (ChromeBook). Both have their merits. In terms of cost, one cannot just look at the cost of the devices alone. There are other costs associated with either approach like warranty enhancements, software licensing, MDM (mobile device management) platforms, maintenance, administration etc. In my experience the iPad approach is more stable, feature rich, and the devices are more durable. Apple has a decades long history of working with schools, indeed for many of us the first computer we saw in the classroom was an Apple. Today, Apple is still highly motivated to work with schools and have been very helpful in terms of technical direction, and financing options. Their app ecosystem is objectively better, and most school related apps and platforms (like the many the school uses) will usually see most stability on the IOS (iPad OS) platform.

Google Chromebooks can be managed similarly with additional licensing, and some of the apps the school works with are available. Most of the schools I work with and have worked with use Apple products, specifically iPads, for their one to one programs.

7. 100.1000.730.50.1.11 Equip-Tech-Middle School: Additionally, what is the BoE doing in trying to recover costs when ending the useful life of any iPads? **Students receive a device when they enter 5th grade and it stays with that student until they graduate. The iPads are then redeployed to the lower grade levels for use as classroom sets.** Are we working with a vendor to sell them, recycle them, etc.? **Not currently.** How many total iPads are used in the school? **Approximately 200.**

8. 100.1000.730.50.1.11 According to the explanation in the FAQ section, this is for iPad purchases. I believe this is a capital purchase and should be done using the BoE non-lapsing fund.

This is not a capital expenditure. iPads support the curriculum and programming needs of our students. To access modern day academic programs students need a variety of tools, paper, workbooks, pencils and technology. Board of Education (BOE) non-lapsing funds are used for one-time, non-recurring, or emergency expenses that support educational purposes, with new legislation (PA 24-45) expanding usage beyond just capital projects. These funds are generally used for items not included in the annual budget, such as unforeseen repairs, specialized equipment, or curriculum enhancements, and require board approval

9. They indicate in item 11 that the internet increased by 89.47% because they have added a Starlink subscription as a back-up during power outages. Generally the school closes during power outages, so why is this necessary?

When we lose power, we also lose our VoIP. Even if we are going home early due to a power outage we would still need to be able to use the phones throughout the building. It poses a very large safety risk to be without phones. We had to rely on cell phones and walkie talkies throughout the building when we have lost power in the past with students in the building.

Also, is Starlink less expensive than what they have now (I assume they probably have Frontier?)?

Our internet access is provided by the CT Education Network (CEN)

Will they be switching over to Starlink at some point if it is less expensive?

No, we have a multi-year contract with CEN. Why have 2?

Answer from our Technology Service:

Starlink is to be used as a backup egress. It does not have enough bandwidth to run the entire school in a sustained fashion. We are using it because we need internet continuity for phones, cameras, alarms and so on. This isn't a convenience, this is a safety issue for the most part.

Our main internet is through the CEN, not frontier. CEN is the Connecticut Education Network and the internet we have is asynchronous enterprise grade fiber and we pay a fraction of what it would normally cost. I need everyone to bear in mind that schools are large buildings with hundreds of people using the internet, so for the school to properly function we need to have the right connections and redundancy.

The desire to implement a second egress for failover purposes was in response to particular incidences where internet outage caused phones to go down etc.

10. What are the actual health insurance costs for 25-26?

Anthem BC/BS has been paid \$1,164,285 for insurance premiums thru February 2026

11. Is the health Insurance for staff of the school only or combined with the town?

The Town and BOE belong to the CT Partnership Plan. The school pays for their employees and the town theirs but we go into a plan as one to get a larger pooled rate.

12. Is it possible to look at the last five years of estimates for health insurance to see how much we exceeded the request on insurance when taxing people?

Year	Budget	Actual
2024-25	1,669,658	1,688,557
2023-24	1,691,571	1,407,165
2022-23	1,308,037	1,304,829
2021-22	1,173,477	1,174,584
2020-21	1,072,634	1,049,805

If an estimate exceeds and we over-tax what happens to the funds? **Surplus funds are transferred to the non-lapsing account at year-end.** I know we do a lot of guessing with estimates, no fault of our own. I just want to know if there has been a consideration to put these funds aside to help future emergencies. (This question will also apply to the general budget also.)

13. Please explain Title 1 "buses do not cover homeless students". Without great detail how many children in town fall under this situation?

Unable to locate "buses do not cover homeless students". As a district we have funds in Title 1 that are set aside for transportation costs for homeless students. A family that is displaced from their residence has the right to remain in their school of last residence. When a student needs to be transported to another district the transportation costs are split between the two districts. This varies throughout the school year. We have about 2-3 students per year that need to access this money.

14. Title IV Equipment tech Elementary and tech middle (100.1000.730.50.1.11) please explain what this category covers? **Title IV is educational software, not equipment.** Do the grants of 10,000 + 34,715 cover the 27,500 difference?

All grant funds have already been subtracted from the BOE budget and have a predefined use. These grants are written each year by the district office and define where the monies will be spent.

15. What happens if the grant does not come through next year for Grants IDEA 611 Special ED 114,986 and IDEA 619 pre school partial para.?

The BOE would ask the BOF for an additional appropriation or the district would need to access the Non-Lapsing fund to cover overages in our budget, Special Education must be funded.

16. 100.2210.151.00.1.10 - Curriculum Development - The actuals are over \$7K for 2024-2025. Is this budgeted too low? Is this reasonable or was there an extra expense in the prior year?

In the 2024/2025 school year we were implementing math and reading programs and teachers needed to update our curriculum to match the purchased programs.

17. 2220 - Library/Media - Based on the actuals, the library suppliers have been under budget. With the addition of the Library Specialist, are you expecting to increase spending in these areas or could these be decreased?

We have not added a Library Media Specialist. We have added a librarian as a consultant to our current para that oversees the library due to a mandate by CT.

18. 2310 - Board of Education - Legal Expenses - There is an increase in the Special Ed legal expenses - What is the driver for this?

We are working with an area district to regionalize some of our supports for Special Education and will need legal guidance in creating these contracts and or services.

The Regular Education legal expense budget is significantly lower than the actual amount for 24-25. Should this be adjusted?

During FY25 the Teachers' Union contract was renegotiated. This is typically the BOE's single largest legal expense, occurring every three years.

19. 100.2320.330.00.1.10 - Professional Dev. Admin - CO - What type of activity is recorded in this account? Can this be reduced?

We attend the state conferences put on for our areas of specialization. Professional Development is extremely important for all employees to ensure the district remains in compliance with best practices throughout the state and beyond. Reduction in this line would need to be directed by the Board of Education.

20. 100.2400.600.31.1.11 - Principal - Discretionary Fund - What type of activity is recorded in this account? What is the driver for the increase?

**Afterschool family/student programming pizza provided: take-apart night, cardboard night, art/cultural night, 7th and 8th grade dances, etc.
Student/teacher awards**

21. 100.2500.530.02.1.10 - Comm. - Postage - CO & School - Compared to the actuals, can this be reduced? **Perhaps by a few dollars, Actual in FY24 was \$3,612**
22. 100.2730.220.00.1.10 - SS/Medicare Cost - What is the driver for this increase?
SS/medicare is 7.65% of the salary. The current year is under budgeted. All other lines have an increase of less than 7%.
23. The BoF always asks for total number of students, classroom numbers and staff breakdowns. Please provide this information. How many students per class, how many certified staff, how many non-certified staff, how many bus drivers, etc?

This is provided every year in our presentation to the Board of Finance. Slide numbers 8,9,10,and 11.

Drivers: 7 Drivers plus bus coordinator and mechanic pick up runs when a driver is out or a new van run is needed due to student needs.

24. In the budget assumption explanation there is a statement that there is a decrease of one para-professional position. However, under FAQ's there appears to be only a move of one para from special ed to regular ed. How many regular ed paras are currently employed and what will that number be in 26/27? How many special ed paras are currently employed and what will that number be in 26/27?

There is one special education paraprofessional reduction and a regular education para is facilitating the language programming on Rosetta Stone. We are still looking to find a World Language Teacher.

25. Please explain the benefits program provided to staff. What percentage of employee benefits are paid for by BoE?

Staff are insured through Anthem (health) and Cigna (dental) under a plan managed by the State of CT. The BOE contributes 80.5% for the Teachers Union and 89.5% for MEUI employees, spouses and dependents are covered at 80%

Do the employees contribute?

Yes.

26. 100.1000.110.00.1.10 Inst/Genl Supplies – PE: The increase does not seem to be justified by actual expenses, or prior year trends. Detailed explanation requested.

FY24 Actuals were \$1,939. Examples of purchases include basket balls, volley balls, bean bags, mini trampoline, cones. Equipment gets used by all students in grades prek-8 and things need replacement to ensure we can continue to provide a wide range of activities.

27. 100.1200.152.10.2.10 ESY Program Teachers: Please explain ESY. Is this an unfunded mandate?

Extended School Year - This is a mandated summer program according to Individual Education Plans for students that qualify under federal law IDEA for special education services.

28. Why such a large cut ESY 100.1200.210.01.2.10 46,327.00?

Due to the large number of students graduating not needing the services.

29. 100.2600.110.30.1.10 Custodians: A senior custodian retired, why is there such a large increase in this line?

The custodian that retired had a specific expertise in the maintenance of our building. He held the position of Head Custodian. We took the position out of the Union contract and hired a Facilities Manager to meet the qualifications our Head Custodian had.

30. 100.2610.430.31.1.13 Maintenance-Boiler repairs: I thought we replaced the boiler? Why do we expect such an increase in maintenance costs?

The boilers were replaced in the lower boiler room due to a flood in 2022. Only the boilers were replaced, not the infrastructure leading into the boilers. We have had some large expenses over the past two years due to these infrastructure issues (ie: valves, pump replacements, thermostats, compressor repairs) It is time to start looking at more permanent fixes to our heating system to get more consistency. FY26 to date \$15,857 which is already over budget for the 2025/2026 school year. \$14,000 was budgeted.

31. 100.2610.430.33.1.13 Maintenance-HVAC: This is tied to the boiler question. Why the large increase? FY26 to date \$13,459, we budgeted \$16,000 for 2025/2026. Every summer we need to clean out all vents and replace any filters. We will be using up the last of the filters that were pre-bought in prior years.

32. 100.2670.430.00.1.13 Maintenance-Safety-Fire Equipment: Please explain the increase?

FY26 to date \$9,086 out of the \$10,000 budgeted. There is regular maintenance for our alarm system and sprinkler systems done every summer.

Is this alarm upkeep, monitor fees?

Yes

33. 100.2700.110.32.3.10 Drivers-Reg Ed: Please explain the increase. Prior years expenditure does not seem to support an increase

During FY25 a driver was improperly charged to Drivers-Sp. Ed.