Benjamin School District 25
Business Services

October 2026
Business & Operations Report

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Joel Filas, Chief School Business Official
DATE: October, 2026
RE: Business & Operations Report

Levy Preview

This week, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released the September 2026 Consumer Price Index at **3.7%.** As we head into the 4th quarter, this number will matter for Levy Year 2027 (next year), as September CPI tends to predict December figures. If the trend continues, we can expect December CPI to fall between 3.6% and 3.8%.

For this year's levy, however, the District will use last December's CPI computation of **2.7%**. This means the District's revenue will increase by 2.7% over the prior year, plus a portion of any new construction within the District's boundaries. While last year's tax levy reflected a higher tax base due to the Main Freight property, this year's new construction will most likely fall back into the $100,000 range. The chart below shows historical new property figures for the past five levy years and shows that for every $100,000 in new property, the District receives about $4,000 in additional tax revenue. As a result, we have no reason to increase our tax levy by more than 5%, and the District will not need to hold a truth-in-taxation hearing for this year's levy.

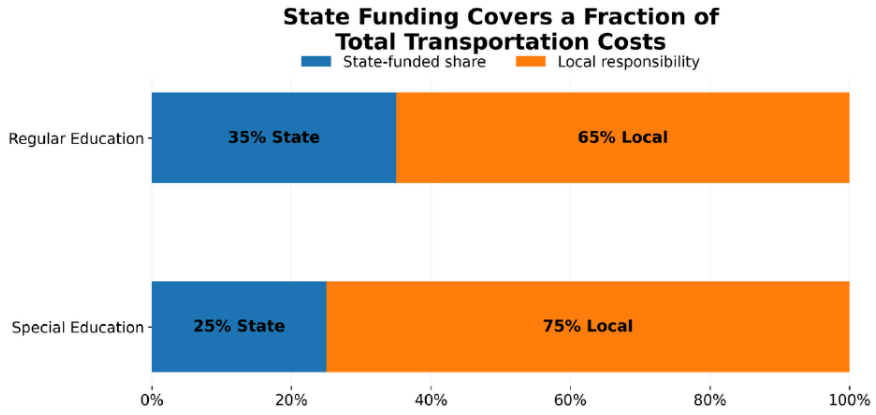
Historical New Property		
Levy Year	New Property EAV	NP Tax Value
2021	$606,160	$25,030
2022	$96,921	$3,978
2023	*$145,710*	$6,037
2024	*$39,740*	$1,351
2025	*$2,565,021.00*	*$93,110.26*
Average	$282,930	$11,682

Potential Impact to the Benjamin Taxpayer: Using these figures, the Business Office projects a total tax rate of 3.846 (3.55 operating rate + .28 Bond and Interest Rate). This is down .10 from last year's total tax rate of 3.9439.

With this tax rate, a Benjamin resident can expect an increase of $40 per $100,000 of fair market value, or $3.33 per month.

LEND FINANCE UPDATE

This year, the LEND Finance Committee will once again put "proration of MCAT reimbursements" at the top of its political agenda. Currently, the State shifts portions of its obligated transportation reimbursements into the funds needed to fully meet its share of Evidence-Based Funding (general state aid).



In fact, the State is ultimately covering only about 35¢ of every $1 spent on regular transportation and 25¢ of every $1 spent on special education transportation. The remainder has to come from local resources.

This is particularly concerning for Tier 4 districts such as Benjamin School District 25, which receive minimal additional EBF funding because of their calculated local wealth, yet experience the same transportation cost increases and reimbursement shortfalls as other districts. This proration severely impacts the District's Operating Budget. In FY27, for example, the District will receive just $600 in new EBF funding, while losing $166,000 to proration. Since FY21, the District has received just $3,600 in new EBF Funding, while losing $1.1m to proration. Put another way, the District's local tax base has subsidized public education in Illinois by more than $1m over the past 7 years.

Illinois cannot claim meaningful progress toward fully funding public education while simultaneously underfunding existing transportation reimbursement obligations. While the State emphasizes annual increases to Evidence-Based Funding, MCAT reimbursements, particularly transportation reimbursements, remain significantly below anticipated levels. This requires school districts to absorb more of these expenses through local resources.

Lunch Program Update

Quest provided the Administration with a September Business Review report that is included as an attachment in the Board Book. The Administration is pleased to report a successful transition to Quest Food Management Services for the 2026–2027 school year. Since the start of the school year, Quest has demonstrated a strong commitment to customer service and responsiveness to student/administrative preferences. The introduction of a daily fresh fruit and vegetable bar, expanded menu selections, and locally sourced pizza has been well received.

Quest has worked collaboratively with District staff to improve serving line efficiency and has actively sought feedback to refine menu offerings. Additionally, introducing à la carte options at Benjamin Middle School in September has generated considerable student interest.

From the District's perspective, the transition has been positive and collaborative. While challenges are expected when implementing a new service, Quest has responded promptly to concerns and resolved issues quickly. Regular weekly and monthly meetings between District administration and Quest representatives have established clear lines of communication, strengthened accountability, and helped develop a strong working relationship.

Early participation data indicate that the new food service program is having a positive impact. A comparison of September 2026 meal counts with September 2025 demonstrates increased participation under Quest, with daily meal counts exceeding the previous year's figures on most school days. Participation increased further following menu adjustments made in response to student preferences, reinforcing the importance of a flexible, student-centered approach.

Looking ahead, Quest plans to establish student food committees at both Evergreen Elementary and Benjamin Middle School to gather feedback, introduce new menu items for tasting, and continually improve the dining experience. Additional initiatives include monthly food promotions and expanded catering opportunities for District events.

The Business/Operations office is encouraged by the early results of this partnership and believes the strong communication and collaboration established during the transition have provided a solid foundation for continued success. The District will continue monitoring participation trends, student satisfaction, and overall program performance throughout the school year.

Technology Report

The Technology Department has initiated a Chromebook pilot program to evaluate the devices' compatibility with the District's existing instructional software, overall functionality, and usability for both students and staff. The pilot will also assess how effectively Chromebooks support classroom instruction and align with the District's curricular goals and instructional practices. Upon completion of the pilot, the Technology Department will provide the Administration with a comprehensive evaluation of its findings. These results will inform a recommendation to the Board of Education on selecting Chromebooks or traditional PC laptops for the District's next student device replacement cycle.

Facilities Report

Regional Office of Education HLS Inspection

The Illinois Administrative Code and the School Code of Illinois require Regional Offices of Education to regularly visit schools for Health/Life Safety inspections and to determine how well schools comply with the State of Illinois operational requirements. This inspection is different from the 10-year HLS Survey conducted by Arcon.

The ROE inspected the three schools on October 8, 2026. Overall, the inspections reflected generally safe building conditions, with relatively minor findings primarily related to routine maintenance, housekeeping, and code compliance. Findings included fire extinguisher inspections, electrical cord use, classroom decorations, signage, and storage practices. The District has already addressed many of these concerns and is coordinating the remaining items for correction. Copies of the reports are available in the Board Book.

One notable finding at both schools involved previously painted ceiling tiles, which must either be verified as maintaining their original fire rating or replaced. Although the ROE has not mandated a specific completion deadline, the Operations Department believes it would be operationally and financially advantageous to coordinate the ceiling tile replacement alongside the planned installation of the District's Emergency Notification System, which will require significant work above the existing ceilings.

LMC Cameras

Security cameras have been installed in the libraries at both schools to enhance building safety and strengthen security measures in these large, high-traffic spaces. The additional camera coverage provides greater visibility, helps safeguard District assets, and supports the monitoring and supervision of students participating in activities outside regular school hours.

A LOOK AHEAD

November Board Meeting:

- Tentative Tax Levy Presentation

Respectfully submitted,

