



**New Fairfield Public Schools  
Budget Assumptions  
December 2024  
FY 2026**

**The Superintendent will develop and present a budget request to the Board of Education that is transparent, fiscally responsible, and ensures continuous improvement and reflects the mission, vision, priorities and strategic plan of the District.**

The following factors will be considered in developing the Superintendent’s Recommended FY 2026 Operating Budget:

1. The administration will recommend a budget that is framed by New Fairfield Public Schools:
  - a. Vision of a Learner - Graduates of the New Fairfield Public Schools are: Knowledgeable Scholars; Talented Communicators; Critical and Creative Thinkers; Engaged Global Citizens, and, Self-determined; and Self-Reliant Individuals.
  - b. NFPS Strategic Plan - Three aspirational goals, addressing curriculum, instruction, and wellness, have been established in support of the NFPS Vision of a Learner.
  - c. Attendance Goal - Continue efforts to reduce the student chronic absenteeism rate to under 8% and achieve at least a 95% staff attendance rate.
  - d. Resources for Learning - Defined as finances, facilities, operational systems, and human resources. Adequate resources are a foundational component for New Fairfield to achieve its Vision of the Learner.
2. The district will continue to explore and implement opportunities to be more cost effective, and to avoid and contain costs wherever possible.
  - a. Staffing - Review current staffing models for cost efficiencies, where possible. Decisions around staffing will be driven by their potential impact on raising student achievement while honoring the commitment to be fiscally responsible.
  - b. Operations - Areas for exploration for cost containment include transportation, energy, technology services and continuing to partner with the town agencies to achieve the greatest efficiencies possible.

- c. Programs and Services - The schools and departments will develop strategies to accomplish the same results with efficient and effective approaches, employing innovative strategies to optimize outcomes at the lowest cost to the community.
  - d. Grants - In order to reduce the strain on the general budget, the District will explore alternative funding sources including grants and incentive programs from the state and federal governments as well as private organizations.
3. Enrollment for the current school year is comparable to last year. The NESDEC projected enrollment data indicates that enrollment will remain remarkably stable for the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is anticipated that staffing levels will remain relatively constant as well.
  4. Class size goals (K-5) are employed in determining the appropriate number of elementary sections at each grade level. The table below lists the class size goals that have been applied in the past as well as the current average class sizes on October 1, 2024.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Class Size Goals	18-20	18-20	20-22	20-22	20-22	20-24
24-25 Average Class Sizes	18	19	22	21	21	24

5. Employee salaries will be the primary driver of the FY 26 operating budget. Costs associated with the negotiated settlements and upcoming negotiations with our employee unions will be included in the FY 26 operating budget. Of the five bargaining groups, settlements with our teachers' association (largest unit), administrators' association and the secretarial association have been completed. Negotiations with the custodial and paraprofessional bargaining units will take place concurrent with this budget season.
6. Continue to fulfill obligations to provide Pupil Services and Special Education programs and services. Meet all Federal and State mandates that pertain to Connecticut school districts, including IDEA and Section 504. These costs can increase at any point during the year due to unanticipated costs for students requiring services based on individual needs.
7. Revenue generated from student tuition will be applied as an offset to related staffing and transportation costs incurred for the operation of the Early Learning Center (ELC) program and the education of Sherman tuition students. Staffing costs associated with the ELC program were offset by \$168,000 in the FY 25 budget. Historically, costs associated with the transportation and education of Sherman high school students have not been applied directly to the BOE operating budget. In an effort to be more transparent, the FY 26 budget will

include an offset of approximately \$80,000 for Sherman high school student transportation costs.

8. The cost of consumable goods and services will be based on existing contracts and estimated to reflect inflation costs where we do not have contractual increases in place.
9. The BOE employs a shared business services model with the town in which 50% of the finance department's employee salaries are shared, including the Town Finance Director's salary. The BOE's Director of Business and Operations salary is fully funded through the BOE budget. The most recent shared services agreement for the finance department between the BOE and Town is dated 2006 and should be updated in collaboration with the town to reflect the current needs of both entities.
10. Turnover savings is defined as the amount of savings when more experienced staff retire or leave the district and new staff are hired at a lower salary. Historically, the district budgeted \$300,000 in turnover savings, which is no longer achievable in a small district such as New Fairfield that does not have a lot of teacher turnover. We are also experiencing a teacher shortage nationally, with fewer highly-qualified educators entering the profession, thus making it more difficult to replace teachers. The FY 26 budget will be year two of a three-year plan to reduce the budgeted amount for turnover savings by another \$50,000 increment. The budgeted amount for turnover savings for the FY 26 budget will be \$200,000.
11. Provide all staff with an ongoing high-quality professional learning program in support of the district's strategic plan.
12. The budget will provide resources to support the multi-year technology replacement plan.
13. Capital Budget - There are critically important projects that should be undertaken in FY 26, including but not limited to:
  - a. The middle school underground storage oil tank must be replaced in 2025 in accordance with state regulations.
  - b. Funding is required to address the lack of classrooms at the middle school to operate essential programs, such as orchestra, chorus, general music, talented & gifted, intervention and world language. The orchestra program currently operates out of a hallway, while the chorus and general music classes facilitate their programs in the old high school cafeteria. This budget will include a funding request for the NFPS facilities department to refurbish existing spaces to accommodate these programs, as it did for STEAM and the library at a considerable savings to the town.