

2023-2024
Superintendent's
Recommended Budget



Questions and Answers

January 24, 2023 - Workshop # 1

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Consolidated & Meeting House

1. Last August, the district added a fourth PreK classroom with one teacher and two paraprofessionals. How many children are currently receiving services and how many typical peers are in each class?

There are currently 60 students receiving special education services, and 44 “typical peers” in the program in total, distributed fairly evenly across the current 8 sections. The low number of typical peers is due to the fact that the decision to open a fourth classroom was made very late, months after families were notified of the results of the lottery, and many families who were not selected in the lottery had already made other arrangements by the time we offered a seat.

We are still watching our projections very closely, and we recognize that if we will need a fourth classroom, that we will need to make the decision early enough so that families of typical peers have not already committed to other arrangements.

2. Based upon prior presentations throughout this year, there were a large number of referrals. Is the trend that we are not going to see that high number of referrals next year? Do we have those numbers from birth to three yet? Are all of the limits regarding kids needing one-on-one paraprofessionals being met for each class? Are there a high number of four-year olds graduating to Kindergarten and we will be left with a large number of typical peers?

We have continued to see a high rate of referrals. The projections for the 2023-2024 school year were built using the number of students returning to ELC, the number of Birth to Three students through February 2024, and the historical number of referrals that have become eligible over the course of the year for the past two years and the current year (years in which we have seen a higher rate of identification than pre-pandemic). We continue to assign paraprofessionals within the program to meet students’ needs, including shifting a paraprofessional to another classroom when needed. There are currently 19 students, occupying 21 seats, receiving special education who will be Kindergarten-eligible next year, and 32 typical peers who will be Kindergarten-eligible next year.

3. The MMHS library certified salary line decreased slightly, while the library certified salary line for the other schools had a contractual increase. Please advise.

This line refers to the MHHS STEAM position. The actual salary for this position is lower than what was budgeted in FY 23.

4. Last year at budget time, the original budget was set for one head principal and two assistant principals for the campus. During the budget process, and to “aid in the transition,” Dr Cosentino added one assistant principal for this 2022-23 to help with transition. A third assistant principal is in the budget for next year. Please advise.

Last year at budget time, as well as throughout the transition planning process, the plan was for one head principal and three assistant principals (see the [NFPS Superintendent Budget Book 2022-2023 1/20/22](#) and the [Proposed Administrative Structure for CELA and MHHS 3/3/22](#)).

To ensure safety and security, the continuation of a three assistant principal model is necessary, particularly given that there are 965 students and more than 180 staff members in the building. Cons/MHHS is the largest school in the district.

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - New Fairfield Middle School

5. How easy or difficult will it be to find a .25 middle school strings teacher?

This is increasing our current Strings teacher from a .50 FTE position to a .75 FTE, so we already have the teacher in place.

6. Repairs and maintenance: Is \$1,150 low considering the age of the building?

No. Repair and maintenance of the building is accounted for in the Buildings & Grounds budget. This allocation is for musical instrument repair and maintenance.

7. General supplies are \$8,043 higher. Trend seems that number should be lower?

We cut general supplies for the middle school by \$25,000 before the budget was presented. The number presented is trending in line with year-over-year spending. \$16,500 of the total number is attributed to Project Lead the Way replacement supplies for grades six and seven and a new module for grade eight.

8. General supplies are \$2,000 and last year was \$0. Can you advise?

In order to support a positive school climate, the school employs PBIS. PBIS stands for Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports. It is an evidence-based framework used by schools to improve school culture and student behavior, promoting a safe environment for learning. PBIS is based on several decades of research by major universities across the country. A key aspect of PBIS is focusing on more positive behaviors and less on negative behaviors.

9. Dues and fees are \$1,164 higher than last year. Are there new dues and fees that we haven't had for a couple years?

These fees represent a return to pre-pandemic levels. They are for memberships for things such as the state music and school counseling associations that support staff as well as provide opportunities for students.

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - New Fairfield High School

10. Repairs and maintenance are \$7,800. With a brand new building should that number be that high? Is that tied into the demolition of old high school?

Repairs and maintenance for individual buildings is not for the physical plant. For the high school, it is for repair and maintenance of equipment such as instruments, fitness and PE equipment, woodworking and printing.

11. Textbooks and workbooks are \$20,500, which seems low. Why would that be \$15,050 lower than 2022/2023 approved? Do more classes have online only resources?

School textbook and workbook budgets include only replacement texts and consumable workbooks; new textbooks are purchased through the curriculum and instruction budget. In last year's budget there was \$14,550 for Biozome consumable workbooks for Physics. They are not included in the current budget

as the science department has determined that our collected curricular resources are sufficient and a better match for our needs.

12. Equipment is \$9,600, which is \$4,000 higher than this year. With new schools is that accurate? What is that including?

The \$9,600 is for the robotics field and competition level equipment for the robotics class.

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Athletics

January 25, 2023 - Workshop # 2

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Instructional Program

13. Employee training is \$84,019 higher than the current year. What is that attributed to?

Last year's budget was reduced by \$100,000 by paying for several items out of the ESSER grant. One of our larger employee training expenses is for our task-design consultant who is working with all of our teachers as well as supporting our coaches and administrators. This work is fundamental to our instructional improvements.

14. Textbooks and workbooks are 47,884 higher than this year? Trying to understand the trend year-over-year increase.

Textbooks and workbooks will always fluctuate year to year as this budget line is for new textbooks. In some years we may have no new adoptions and in others we may have one or more. This year's budget primarily supports new programs for middle school math and science.

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Districtwide

15. Esser funds of \$390,000 are being applied to this budget. Are there any more Esser funds available to be used in this budget or future budgets and how does this relate to what is on page 71?

No. The \$390,000 applied to the FY 24 budget exhausts all remaining funds, which need to be expended by 9/24/24. The \$390,000 was not included on the grant sheet on page 71 of the budget document because it is being applied to the operating budget.

16. Given the recent health insurance discussions at the BOF meetings, what was the thought process for leaving the health insurance expense unchanged?

Historically, health insurance has remained relatively flat with a decrease the last two fiscal years. Following that trend and last FY contract negotiations, we will continue to save 219K annually with the deductible increase. Additionally, each year employees will contribute 0.5% more in FY 23 and an additional 0.5% more in FY 24 toward their premium, thereby increasing our contribution. This fact, in combination with the Board of Finance use of our surplus funds, it was determined that it is appropriate to keep the number flat for FY24 at this time.

17. On slide 18 of the budget presentation under non-payroll items, *Requests Not Included*, eFinance Upgrade is listed. Will this upgrade take place this year or will the BOE finance system not be supported in the future?

It was removed from our operating budget for FY 24 since it will be upgraded within our operating FY 23.

18. Tuition VO-AG is lower for 2023-2024, but during the last four years it took a big jump? Do we have any thoughts as to why that is?

For FY23, we accounted for 13 potential students to attend VO-AG. We currently have 11 students attending, one of which is graduating. For FY24, we anticipate two students applying to Shepaug, which would bring our total to 12.

19. Permanent building subs are up \$67,875, but they are not reflected in the FTE column? Is that one FTE added?

Permanent building substitutes are not included in our FTE as they are part of our substitute pool. The increase is due to those positions being continued from ESSER. We have two building substitutes allocated per building for FY 24.

These positions are an important resource in maintaining continuity of coverage for teacher absences.

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Central Office

20. Please provide a breakdown of the number of staff and administrators living out of district who have children attending the New Fairfield Schools? (By grade level for next year)

One administrator and nine staff members send their children to the New Fairfield Public Schools in accordance with Policy 5118.111 (Non-resident Students).

| Grade in 2023-2024 | Number of Students |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| PreK & K | 0 |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 0 |
| 4 | 2 |
| 5 | 0 |
| 6 | 5 |
| 7 | 1 |
| 8 | 1 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 2 |
| 11 | 1 |
| 12 | 2 |
| Total | 16 |

21. Other Professional Services increased by \$10,000, while for the last 3 years it was zero. What is this for?

The \$10,000 is for the transportation study for the HS Healthier Start Time Project. A study is necessary to analyze the impact of a shift from a three-tier bus system to a two-tier bus system.

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Technology

January 31, 2023 - BOE Workshop #3

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Special Education

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Pupil Personnel Services

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Facilities

FY 2023-24 Budget Questions - Capital Improvement Plan

22. The 2024-2025 capital plan request is a bit high, but it seems like most of the items are due to the building and facility's old age. Please advise.

The middle school is almost 30 years old and many significant projects related to its infrastructure have been delayed for future years due to financial constraints. The initial capital budget request for 2023-24 was \$343,575. This request has been further reduced by the approval by the Board of Finance of \$95,000 in surplus funds to go back to the district's capital and non-recurring fund. Therefore, the total capital request for FY 24 is now \$238,575.

A long-term discussion is needed about how to fund the capital needs of the district through annual appropriations, special appropriations, or additional bonding as the district's current capital funding is insufficient to meet the requirements of the capital plan.