



**New Fairfield Public Schools
Budget Assumptions
December 2023
FY 2025**

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 goals of the District.

The following factors will be considered in developing the Superintendent’s Recommended FY 2025 Operating Budget:

1. The administration will recommend a budget that is framed by New Fairfield Public Schools:
 - a. Vision of a Graduate - 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. High-Quality Instruction (HQI) - Provide all students with high-quality instruction and curricula in an adaptive and flexible learning environment.
 - c. Healthy Learning Environment - Ensure a healthy learning environment that fosters physical and emotional safety, respect and a sense of belonging for all students.
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 for shared services 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.

3. 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 private organizations.
4. Enrollment for the current school year is only one student less than last year. The NESDEC projected enrollment data indicates that enrollment will remain fairly stable for the next 5-10 years. Therefore, it is anticipated that staffing levels will remain relatively constant as well. The PPS department examines ELC trends and will make a recommendation for appropriate staffing levels.
5. 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, 2023.

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5
Class Size Goals	18	18-20	20-22	20-22	20-22	20-24
23-24 Average Class Sizes	18.3	18.3	20.9	19.7	22.3	23.7

6. The FY 24 operating budget was partially supported with funding from the ARP ESSER grants which have now all been exhausted. In order to maintain essential services supported by ARP ESSER, the FY 25 budget may need to assume up to \$390,000.
7. Costs associated with the negotiated settlements with our employee unions will be included in the FY 25 operating budget. The cost of hourly employees will rise to keep pace with the State’s increasing minimum wage.
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. In an economy that is experiencing high inflation, continued supply chain issues, ongoing labor shortages and growing need for competitive wage increases (e.g., BCBA’s, RBTs, School Nurses, etc.) we anticipate a significant impact on multiple aspects of the FY 25 budget.
9. Meet all Federal and State mandates that pertain to Connecticut school districts, including IDEA and Section 504. Continue to fulfill obligations to provide Pupil Services and Special Education programs and services. These costs can increase at any point during the year due to unanticipated costs for students requiring services based on individual needs.
10. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is requiring school districts to adopt a state approved literacy program according to the Right to Read Act. New Fairfield Public

Schools applied for a waiver from these requirements. We recently received a **Transitional Waiver** designation requiring us to substitute specific programmatic or curriculum components. As a result, we will need to purchase one of the state approved reading programs for fluency, comprehension and vocabulary estimated to cost us between \$200,000 and \$250,000 for the first year of implementation, including the extensive revision of curriculum, purchase of required materials and necessary professional learning.

11. The current contract with First Student to provide school transportation services expires at the end of the 23-24 school year. Accordingly, a Request for Proposals (RFP/Bid) was issued in October and responses were opened at the end of November. As we are currently in the negotiation phase for a new contract, it is too early to determine what impact this will have on the FY 25 budget.
12. There is a new state mandate, requiring school districts to evaluate the indoor air quality (IAQ and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in all school buildings by January 1, 2025, regardless of their age. This work must be performed by a certified testing, adjusting and balancing (TAB) technician, a certified industrial hygienist or a mechanical engineer. This new requirement is expected to have a significant impact on the FY 25 budget.
13. Capital Budget - There are a number of critically important projects that should be undertaken in FY 25 to ensure the health, safety and welfare of students, staff and community members using our facilities. These include the Turf Field & Track Replacement at the high school, several ongoing, age-related projects at the Middle School and the relocation of the Security Operation Center (SOC) to create a STEAM classroom and reclaim the library.
14. Provide all staff with an ongoing high-quality professional learning program in support of the district's instructional agenda.
15. The budget will provide resources to support the multi-year technology replacement plan.
16. The new high school includes a number of added features that will require new service contracts and increased cost to some existing contracts. Added features include: gym bleachers, emergency generator, food service kitchen, boiler plant and new security technology. Increased cost to existing service contracts include: building management system, emergency exit and lighting systems, kitchen and culinary hood cleaning, water system operator services and water quality testing services.