

Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting - Budget Workshop

Thursday, January 25, 2024 7:00 PM

Board of Education Conference Room E, Live Stream:

<http://devos2.bethel.k12.ct.us/show?video=763ff4de0370> Materials can be viewed at: <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Organization/2425> The opportunity for members of the public wishing to make comments can attend and comment in-person or may send public comments to the Board via email or letter and it will be included as part of the record of the meeting., 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801

1. Call to Order

Speaker(s): Policy

9326

1.A. Roll Call for Quorum

1.B. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Budget Workshop - IT, Curriculum, and Special Education

3. Correspondence

Speaker(s): Policy

9326

4. Public Comment

(Please note: The Board welcomes Public Comment and asks that speakers please limit their comments to 2 minutes. Speakers may offer objective comments of school operations and programs that concern them. The Board will not permit any expression of personal complaints or defamatory comments about Board of Education personnel and students, nor against any person connected with the Bethel Public School System.)

Speaker(s): Policy

9326

5. Adjourn

BOE Members 2024-2025 BUDGET Q & A
January 23, 25, and 30, 2024 & February 1, 2024

#	Name - Initials	Question(s)	Answer(s)
January 25, 2024 - IT, Curriculum, SPED			
1.	Jlarsen	I count 5 new paraeducators are among all the schools are these from the grant or new additions needed by more special education students?	They are paraeducators that were moved from the ARP ESSER Grant. These are the positions we moved to the operating budget in September of 2023. The positions were added several years ago (again, grant funded) to support the needs of our students with disabilities.
2.	Jlarsen	Is the increase in the ESY certified staff due to more students or higher need students?	The increase is due in part to certified staff salary increases. We also had more staff needed because we had more students with significant needs.
3.	Jlarsen	The job coach line does not list any FTE they are not full time?	Job coaches are hourly employees. They are not full time, nor do they receive benefits. They are assigned hours based on student needs.
4.	Jlarsen	The SPED transportation public line shows an increase \$56,276 what is this due to?	The amount is based on needs for next year's student population and the increased daily rate of that transportation. The increase brings that budget more in line with this year's actual cost.
5.	Jlarsen	Tuition SPED- CT private- SW has an increase of \$101,864 is this due to more student or increase on current student rates?	The requested tuition amounts reflected our actual current and projected placements for next year. We anticipate an additional placement in a private special education program, however, we expect fewer placements in other LEAs (e.g. CES). We also factor in anticipated tuition increases at each of the schools.
6.	Jlarsen	Transportation SPED in district also has an increase \$140,212 what is this due to?	We had to add an additional in-town van this year to meet student needs and anticipate that we will need that van next year also. Additionally, there is a contractual 3% increase on all the vans.

BOE Members 2024-2025 BUDGET Q & A
January 23, 25, and 30, 2024 & February 1, 2024

7.	Jlarsen	I see the Certified Staff- Social Worker Services line goes from 3.9 FTE to 4.0 FTE I thought we got another social worker due to a grant?	It is a 3 year grant and that Social Worker will still be charged from a grant next year. You do not see grant-funded employees in the Operating budget, as they are not charged there. We actually have 6 social workers.
8.	Jlarsen	Nurse-SW– Health Services line is .64 FTE what is this for?	Nursing services at St. Mary’s are provided by the float nurse. She spends part of the day at St. Mary’s and the rest of the time at Bethel Middle School or covers nurses in other buildings for absences.
9.	Jlarsen/SC	We currently have only 4 psychologists but have 5 schools. How does this work? Is it enough to cover testing and service to students? Especially with the increases in SPED.	One school psychologist currently splits time between Berry and Rockwell Schools. The school psychologists engage in a significant amount of testing and some counseling for students. We also have school social workers and school counselors at both schools, who provide individual and group counseling support for students.
10.	Jlarsen	On the certified staff-sw- speech/language line it lists 6.4 FTE for last year and only 6.0 FTE for this year? I thought we were getting a new Speech/Language person?	The new person will be charged to the IDEA grant. We are increasing from .4 to 1.0 FTE and charging it all to the grant due to the increase.
11.	Jlarsen	Why the decrease in the Tutors-SW- Curriculum line from \$5,000 to \$3,000?	This line is for HS after school academic support and it was reduced based on this year’s actual and anticipated expenditures.
12.	Jlarsen	What is the decrease of the other staff-sw under curriculum from .33 FTE to 0?	In the past, we charged part of the PowerSchool Specialist to Curriculum. We are now charging the entire position to the technology budget, as we reorganized the responsibilities within the office. See the increase of .33 to Other Staff-Technology - question 15.
13.	Jlarsen	Why the \$10,000 decrease in the GED preparation?	We will be receiving state grant funding to offset the cost of GED preparation.
14.	Jlarsen	Why is summer school all 0 except	We have discontinued the Summer’s Best Program so we no longer need to pay a

BOE Members 2024-2025 BUDGET Q & A
January 23, 25, and 30, 2024 & February 1, 2024

		one line?	coordinator for that, and our Supervisors of Special Education oversee the Extended School Year (ESY) program. Also, the person who will be coordinating the BHS Credit Recovery Summer School program will receive a stipend.
15.	Jlarsen	Why is other staff-sw-technology moving from 4.67 FTE to 5.0 FTE?	We are now charging all of the PowerSchool Specialists to Technology. In the past the position was split between Curriculum and Technology. See question 12.
16.	Jlarsen	Why are repair and maint contracts technology -48% does this have to do with the copiers?	This is not related to copiers. Last year we transitioned staff from Mac devices to Windows devices. In doing so we no longer needed our Visionary contract to repair these devices. We also handle repairs for Chromebooks in house. We reduced our Dell and HP service contracts because the type of damage we typically see is outside the scope of the manufacturer warranties.
17.	Jlarsen	Why are we cutting Instructional supplies-sw- technology by 50%?	Most supplies purchased by Tech are now included in Tech Supplies & Software subscriptions.
18.	Jlarsen	I am concerned with the number of special education students that are increasing each year and more with high needs that we may be making teacher/PPS staff caseloads too large?	We have added 5 special education teachers and additional PPS staff (e.g., BCBA's, School Social Workers) via new or reallocated positions over the past few years to address the caseloads and support meeting IEP hours. This was reviewed in the budget presentation. In terms of PPS staff, speech and language needs are high, hence we have increased the position to full-time. We also utilize contracted services when needed.
19.	KD	Why is there a decrease in Other Staff- SW-OT?	One of our occupational therapists with a higher salary was replaced by an OT with a lower salary. The FTEs did not change.
20.	KD	Why is there an increase in Dues and Fees- SW- Curriculum?	The fees are for the Partnership for Educational Leadership, SIIP Network. It was originally paid through in the BOE Dues and Fees, but this membership is specifically for the Assistant Superintendent.
21.	KD	How many ESY teachers do you anticipate needing? Could that number be adjusted based on	ESY staffing for both teachers and paraeducators is adjusted each year based on student enrollment in ESY and levels of need. For example, we had 2 additional staff members this summer from the previous summer. At the moment we

BOE Members 2024-2025 BUDGET Q & A
January 23, 25, and 30, 2024 & February 1, 2024

		enrollment? Same questions for ESY Paras	anticipate needing similar staffing to what we had last summer.
22.	KD	Please explain Professional Sped Services- SW.	Professional services include a variety of contracted services for students with disabilities. Examples of contracted services include: educational audiology services, outside evaluations by neuropsychologists or psychiatrists, language interpretation services, and SLP and BCBA contracted services.
23.	KD	Professional Employee Training-SW- Sped was \$5,000 last year and again \$5,000 for the 24-25 budget. What does the training entail? Given the needs of our students, does that cover the training needed?	This line covers training for our special education teachers and other staff. This includes PMT training as well as professional learning based on the employee and the students they are working with. As an example, we have a special education teacher who is currently receiving training to become an Orton-Gillingham certified reading teacher. Note that School Psychologists, School Social Workers, and Speech-Language Pathologists have their own conference lines and they use these funds to access training via their professional organizations. In addition, we use Medicaid reimbursement funds to pay for excellent professional training opportunities that are outside of our budget.
24.	KD/SC	Should two teachers be moved to COF 4s program, per contract, will the two teachers need additional training to support all students? (ie. PMT, DTI, De-escalation strategies, program/curriculum, administering assessments, etc) Is this built into the budget or has it been considered?	We do not anticipate any budgetary impact due to training needs. All training will be internal, provided by our staff on PL days or on an ongoing basis at PLCs.
25.	KD/SC	At the previous meeting and budget presentation, it was stated that a 2nd grade teacher, due to an influx of K students, could be moved to K because the first grade class is small.	Please know, we do not know if we will need an additional kindergarten section and may not have to move any sections. We were talking more hypothetically. The assumption underlying this question is a literal one, that we would take an existing person and move them. We are referring to an FTE. There is always

BOE Members 2024-2025 BUDGET Q & A
January 23, 25, and 30, 2024 & February 1, 2024

		<p>Going from 2nd grade K (even though the certification allows it) could be problematic where the teacher would need to learn a new reading program, curriculum, etc. I know this has happened and can happen and the teacher would get the support he/she needs to implement the curriculum/program, however; would it make more sense to pull from COF for the K teacher? And post for the COF 4s 1 year position? If a second grade teacher moved to K, would the class sizes remain similar and in the recommended guidelines across Berry and Rockwell? Potentially, Berry and Rockwell would have significant differences in grade 2 class size and sections. What school will the additional K sections go to? Is it the goal to keep the same number of sections at Berry and Rockwell? As well as class size?</p>	<p>movement in grade levels. Any time a teacher moves grade levels, which happens frequently, there is a learning curve with the curriculum and therefore we need to provide support. We could not pull from COF, because we need to use our existing staff. The current plan (pending enrollment) is to reduce 1 section from Kindergarten at both schools, making the numbers equal and therefore should not affect class size.</p>
26.	KD	<p>Will additional paras be needed in the COF 4's program?</p>	<p>No. We will reallocate existing paras to support the program.</p>
27.	BF	<p>How has/why is there such a disparity. In the number of students with significant disabilities in Berry and Rockwell. This is especially true in grades 1 and 2.</p>	<p>When we did the Rockwell renovation, the goal was to centralize our FLEX program at Rockwell and our Foundations/Essentials programs (for students with Autism and cognitive disabilities) at Berry. We have seen a significant increase in the number of students requiring Essentials and Foundations programming, and so we added an Essentials classroom at Rockwell this year. However, our</p>

BOE Members 2024-2025 BUDGET Q & A
January 23, 25, and 30, 2024 & February 1, 2024

			students with the most significant developmental needs continue to be placed at Berry, as the school has more space and having similar students in one school allows for teacher collaboration and efficient use of resources.
28.	BF	There has been an opening in IT for awhile now. Do we have to consider additional compensation to attract and or retain qualified personnel?	Recent exit interview data from the IT department indicates that employees are leaving for higher paying positions and growth opportunities. We are limited in the number of opportunities that are available.
29.	JA	Re: PA 23-137 educating/providing services for students with severe disabilities through their 22nd year of age: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What happens if a student enters during their 22 year over the summer? 2. If a student comes in as a 21-year-old, would they be evaluated at the age of 21 for services through 22 years of age? 	We are responsible to implement IEPs for the entire school year for eligible students who turn 22 on or after July 1. Typically a PPT makes a decision about whether or not a student requires transition services well before their 21st birthday. Students who have earned and accepted a high school diploma in another district are no longer eligible for special education services. If a student moves to Bethel at age 21 we review their records and IEP to determine their eligibility for transition programming. We have had students move to Bethel and enroll directly in our transition program at age 20, 21, or 22 after completing their preK-12 education in a previous district.
30.	JLewis	Is there a plan in place, considering factors such as the current budget, increasing expenses for curriculum, program materials, and academic resources, along with the growing number of students in need of special education services and the preference for in-district	We are engaged in continuous planning and program development for special education. For example, we reorganized caseloads at our elementary level over past two years to develop Essentials programming for students with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities at Rockwell and Johnson Schools. We have previously worked very hard to develop and align our FLEX/STEP programming for students with significant social and emotional needs in grades K-12. Programming needs are sometimes hard to predict, but we analyze trends for our current students and also make predictions based on priorities articulated by CSDE (for example, structured literacy programs for Dyslexia, or transitioning

BOE Members 2024-2025 BUDGET Q & A
January 23, 25, and 30, 2024 & February 1, 2024

		placements, to effectively address ongoing program changes for students with special education needs across all grade levels and programs?	programming for 18-22 year old students).
--	--	--	---