

Bethel Board of Education Special Meeting - Budget Workshop/Budget Deliberations/Approval

Tuesday, February 18, 2025 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. 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

3. Correspondence

Speaker (s): Policy
9326

4. Recommended Executive Session

4.A. CT General Statutes 1-210(b)(9) Negotiations - Bethel Administrators' Negotiations

5. Budget Workshop - Budget Deliberations/Approval

6. Adjourn



Board of Education, Bethel <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Budget

Tony Piera <Tony.Piera@rpautomation.com>
To: Ed <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Fri, Feb 14, 2025 at 8:25 AM

Good morning, please do not cut any teachers or programs from our schools.

I have lived in Bethel for 61 years. We know how important it is not to have educators cut from our schools. I agree there is so much \$\$ waisted but it won't be wasted being spent on educating our children.

Thank you,
Anthony Piera

RP Automation Inc
Robot Repair Center
Engineering, Training, Sales and Service
102 Wooster Street 4A
Bethel, CT 06801 USA

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Phone 001 203 790 5787
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Thank you

I'm just an average citizen, but I hope you might have time to read this information.

Fluoride in drinking water:

The subject of fluoride in drinking water has been in the local and national news lately. Western Europe bans fluoridated drinking water. Americans comprise 4% of the world's population yet we drink more than 50% of all the fluoridated water in the world. Fluoride is neurotoxic and can affect various parts of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord and peripheral nerves. Fluoride is an industrial by-product of the phosphate fertilizer industry. The fluoride received by towns across the country undergoes no purification procedures and is often contaminated with elevated levels harmful toxins, including lead, aluminum, and arsenic. In higher doses, fluoride is used in pesticides to kill rats and insects. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires all fluoride toothpaste sold in the United States to carry a poison warning that instructs users to contact a poison control center if they (or children) swallow more than used for normal brushing. Non fluoride toothpaste is available, but hard to find. There are other documented negative health effects linked to fluoride. Because the US federal government will take no action, over 1,400 American communities have now banned fluoride from their water. There are national studies showing fluoride doesn't help teeth at all. The Iowa Fluoride Study (IFS), funded by the National Institutes of Health, is the most comprehensive, ongoing research project in the U.S. - the only one measuring all sources of fluoride ingestion - they found no significant correlation between ingested fluoride and cavity reduction. The World Health Organization did a study showing cavity rates in children (age 12) were the same in countries that did and did not use fluoridated water. The following is a partial list of countries that have a 100% ban on fluoridated water: Austria, Belgium, Britain (89% ban), Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain (90%), Sweden, Switzerland. There is no law (federal or state) requiring fluoride to be in a town's drinking water. The decision is optional and is decided by local town governments.

From France: "Fluoride chemicals are not included in the list of chemicals for drinking water treatment. This is due to ethical as well as medical considerations." Louis Sanchez, Directeur de la Protection de l'Environnement, August 25, 2000.

(source material for this information: "Fluoride Action Network")

Take Care,
W^m Brown

RECEIVED
FEB 18 2025
BETHEL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CENTRAL OFFICE



Board of Education, Bethel <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Correspondence for 2/18 Budget Meeting - 3rd Grade Strings Program

27-Friedland, Lily <[REDACTED]>
To: Bethel Board of Education <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Sun, Feb 16, 2025 at 2:23 PM

Dear Bethel Board of Education,

My name is Lily Friedland, and I am a current sophomore at BHS. I am very concerned about the potential cuts to the 3rd grade strings program. To follow up my public comments at the past two budget meetings, I have compiled some additional research regarding the general impact that music programs have on the reduction of achievement gaps in schools.

It is commonly known that Connecticut as a whole has one of the largest achievement gaps in the country. Schools around the US have seen significant success with providing music programs to close achievement gaps, along with scientific evidence to prove its impact. A study on the benefits of music on the mental development of children at Northwestern University suggests that "kids learning how to play an instrument can lead to better language and reading skills. The more sounds that the kids hear in a musical setting, the more advanced their brain becomes." There is a clear correlation between access to music programs and academic success. By being exposed to music during their early education, students construct a foundation for strong academic performance and cognitive development, not to mention the life skills and values that students gain from learning and performing music.

Additionally, schools provide the most affordable options for parents to get their young children involved in music. On average, private music lessons in CT can cost between \$20 and \$300 per hour (depending on many factors), while music extracurriculars at Bethel Public Schools only require parents to pay the instrument rental fees. This ensures that every student, regardless of their family's financial circumstances, has the opportunity to learn and benefit from music education. With 30% of BHS students being considered economically disadvantaged, these programs are truly essential in Bethel.

To conclude, aside from its scientifically proven benefits, music is a passion that so many students value. Music has been incredibly transformative to my personal growth and has enriched my educational experience at Bethel Public Schools, as it has for countless other students. While discontinuing 3rd grade strings would not have a direct impact on student programming, there would undoubtedly be a long-term decrease in the size and prestige of music ensembles at all school levels. Without the opportunity to get involved with the string ensemble as early as third grade, less students will ultimately enroll in orchestra starting in 4th grade and beyond due to the fact that they are presented with a wider variety of options to choose for their activity period.

I appreciate your continued efforts to search for ways to preserve as many important pieces of the budget as possible. This is not an easy task and I understand that these proposed cuts are not ideal. Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration as you make your final decisions.

Sincerely,
Lily Friedland

Works Consulted:

Gross, Allie. "Study: Music Key to Closing Achievement Gap." *K-12 Dive*, 3 Sept. 2014,
www.k12dive.com/news/study-music-key-to-closing-achievement-gap/304555.

Cull, Ian. "Music May Help Close Achievement Gap: Study." *NBC Bay Area*, 3 Sept. 2014,
www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/music-may-help-close-achievement-gap-study/1979089.



Board of Education, Bethel <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Budget

1 message

Erin Tegmier <erintegmier@gmail.com>
To: "boe@bethel.k12.ct.us" <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Tue, Feb 18, 2025 at 2:17 PM

Dear Bethel Board of Education Members -

I am writing to express my strong support in the retention of teaching positions that directly relate to students within our schools. As an advocate for the wellness of my students, I believe it is imperative to hold together our programs for our students. Physical Education plays a critical part in ensuring children lead a healthy and active lifestyle currently and into their future. SHAPE recommends 150 minutes a week of physical activity. If a position is cut in the Physical Education program it would be detrimental to the program and the well being of movement for these children. The PE programs go well beyond the gymnasium or playing field. Studies have shown students who are physically active during the school day tend to perform better academically. Cutting back will hinder our physically literate students as well as their capability of making healthy life choices.

I urge you to prioritize our Physical Education program, as well as our programs such as Music, Art, and Library Media. The benefits of investing in our PE teachers and other programs outweigh the short term savings. We need to invest in these positions and programs for a healthier community for our families and children.

I know hard decisions need to be made. However, we need to prioritize teaching positions who provide direct instruction to our students.

Thank You for your time.

Sincerely,
Erin Tegmier
[4 Brookview Court](#)
[Bethel, CT 06801](#)



To: The Bethel Board of Education

From: Dr. Christine Carver, Superintendent of Schools

Date: February 13, 2025

RE: Summary - Potential Reductions

At our February 12, 2025, Board of Education Meeting, I indicated that I would submit options for the Board to consider for potential reductions, cost savings, impact to students and programs, reductions in FTEs, and finally potential layoffs in staffing. ***I want to caution the Board that potential layoff estimations are based on staffing as of February 12, 2025. It does NOT consider any staff member taking the Early Retirement Incentive nor leaving as part of normal attrition. There likely will be significant changes between now and the end of the year.*** In addition, the total effect of layoffs does not assume future reductions, should they occur. As an additional reminder, as has been previously communicated, we need to assume the cost of unemployment for some positions.

None of the reductions below are ideal, but we can make all of them work. We do think that the second consideration for the Instructional Coaches (see below) would be the better option. You will note, that next to each option, we indicated that, if accepted, the percent we can reduce the budget by.

Prior to reviewing potential future reductions, I want to remind the Board that the cost of keeping our current programs is 10.48%. Prior to my presentation on January 30, 2025, the following reductions were made.

Reductions Included in the 2025-2026 Proposed Superintendent Budget	Reduction Amount	Impact on Budget Increase	Impact on Programs	Total FTE Reduction	Potential for Layoffs	
3 Special Ed / Preschool Teachers	\$170,000	0.59%	Move Circle of Friends to 1/2 day model	3.0	0	
Salaries	\$70,086		Reduction in tutoring hours to provide intervention services for students in need, Superintendent reduction and reduction in curriculum work across the district.	0 Reduced Hours	0	
Technology Equipment	\$76,806		Only able to purchase one grade level of replacement Chromebooks. No impact next year, significant impact on the long-term cycle.	N/A	N/A	
Textbooks & Supplies	\$35,000		Not able to purchase textbooks on the same replacement cycle & limits to some supplies.	N/A	N/A	
Dues & Fees	\$4,700		Reduction in Superintendent Line - loss of professional learning and networking for Superintendent.	N/A	N/A	
Subtotal Previous Reductions	\$356,592					
				Total Staffing Impact:	3.0	0

Potential NEW Reductions

Next, in each table, we broke apart different options for potential reductions that have been discussed to date and one area that we did not formally discuss.

Elementary Specials

Previous Reductions	Reduction Amount	Impact on Budget Increase	Impact on Programs for Students	Total FTE Reduction	Potential for Layoffs
Change elementary	\$202,134	0.34%	No loss of programs for students. They would have the same amount of specials	4.0	3.0

specials schedule for greater efficiencies between Berry School and Rockwell School			and be able to accommodate adaptive programs. Assumes we fully staff lunch monitors.		
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Instructional Coaches

The district currently has 5.5 Instructional Coaches, K-12. This research-based practice is an embedded professional learning model for teachers. Our Instructional coaches play a critical role in driving student achievement and supporting teacher growth, making them an invaluable asset to our district. Our instructional coaches work side-by-side with teachers to strengthen instructional practices, ensuring that classrooms are engaging, rigorous, and aligned with best practices. For instance, coaches model effective teaching strategies helping teachers reach students with diverse needs. They also provide real-time feedback, allowing teachers to make immediate adjustments that enhance student understanding. Instructional coaches plan and lead professional learning sessions tailored to school goals and are integral during PLC meetings sharing resources and building teachers’ content knowledge and pedagogy. Additionally, they analyze student data alongside teachers to identify learning gaps and collaboratively design targeted lessons for students. This support fosters teacher efficacy and so they feel equipped and supported to meet their students' diverse needs. Instructional coaches also serve as thought partners for school leaders, offering insights into classroom trends and helping shape data-driven decisions. Ultimately, their impact extends beyond individual classrooms, creating a culture of continuous improvement that leads to stronger outcomes for all students.

If possible, we do not think it is wise to cut the model entirely. Another note, the BHS Instructional Coach is only part-time. We could not cut the full position, as we need the science sections at Bethel High School. We could only reduce by the contractual increase for coaching, which is reflected in the numbers below.

Previous Reductions	Reduction Amount	Impact on Budget Increase	Impact on Programs for Students	Total FTE Reduction	Potential for Layoffs
Reduce all Instructional Coaches	\$385,903	0.46%	See above	5.0	4.0
OR					
Reduce 2.5 Instructional	\$196,993	0.33%	See above	2.0	1.0

Coaches (3 total remain)					
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Other Staffing Reduction Options

Previous Reductions	Reduction Amount	Impact on Budget Increase	Impact on Programs for Students	Total FTE Reduction	Potential for Layoffs
Reduction of Grade Five Section	\$35,750	0.06%	In moving from 10 to 9 sections in grade 5, class size could go up from 21 to 23.7. This is within the Board of Education Class Size Guidelines	1.0	1.0
School Psychologist	\$93,000	0.15%	We did not formally discuss this position, but we do not currently have it. It is a new proposal. We would continue current practices for serving students and conducting evaluations.	N/A	N/A
Move Library Media into the Specials Rotation	\$152,626	0.25%	This would impact student specials/options at Johnson and Bethel Middle School. We would need to identify one specials program at each school to eliminate to appreciate this reduction	2.0	2.0

Other Reductions Discussed

Previous Reductions	Reduction Amount	Impact on Budget Increase	Impact on Programs for Students	Total FTE Reduction	Potential for Layoffs
Incorporate 3rd Grade Strings into School Day	\$6,764	0.01%	This would have no impact in student programs. In working with Dr. Salerno, she has identified a way to incorporate the before-school program into the school day. It actually may provide more opportunities for students.	N/A	N/A
Assessment Reduction	\$19,000	0.03%	No student impact. As discussed, we would eliminate NWEA, purchase a K-3 Literacy Assessment, and explore options for BMS literacy.	N/A	N/A

Status of Union Discussions regarding Concessions

As requested, I approached the Bethel Administrator Association and the Bethel Education Association. Here is the status of the meetings.

Bargaining Unit	Meeting Date	Status
Bethel Administrators Association	2/12/25	Possible Executive Session on 2/18/25
Bethel Education Association	2/18/25	Not yet determined

I am available by phone to speak about any of the above reductions and/or anything else you would like for us to consider.

Average % of time allocated to Instructional Coaches' Responsibilities as delineated in the **2024 Framework of Teaching Instructional Coach Rubric**.

<u>Instruction and Delivery of Service</u>	
% of time spent providing instruction in classrooms to teachers and students	27%
Provides side-by-side coaching in a classroom setting Shares expertise with staff e.g., through teaching model lessons, Engages educators in learning new instructional skills Collaborating with small group instruction model to target academic gaps or extend/enrich learning	
% of time providing/supporting job-embedded professional learning to groups of teachers (including PLCs- Professional Learning Communities)	25%
Shares with and develops the expertise of staff, e.g., leading curriculum studies for culturally responsive teaching, facilitating data cycles, integrating new technologies and tools, developing data analysis skills, sharing best practices and research-based instructional strategies	
% of time providing/supporting job- embedded professional learning to <u>individual teachers</u>	10%
Planning with individual teachers to target instruction for groups of students Analyzing formative and summative assessment data with individual teachers to provide responsive instruction	
<u>Planning and Preparation</u>	
% of time acquiring resources for individual or groups of teachers to support classroom instruction	4%
Locating /creating /modifying resources for teachers to support instructional improvement, e.g. differentiated instruction and resources for diverse learners (advanced, multi-lingual, students with special needs)	
% of time planning for professional learning workshops or sessions.	2%
Planning for professional learning on district professional days and/or in-house professional learning. Attending monthly building-based professional learning committees (after school) and taking a leadership role in developing short-term and long-term professional development plans for the school and department.	
% of time spent monitoring the implementation of the instructional program	3%
Determining unit timelines, communicating dates for common assessments, and making adjustments to learning plans as needed. Coordinating with PLC and/or dept leaders to set PLC agendas, identify needs and determine focus areas.	
% of time organizing and analyzing data at the building and district level to monitor curriculum and inform instruction	8%
Analyzing standardized assessment data to monitor curriculum adjustments (SBAC, NGSS NWEA, and Interim assessments) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compile and analyze common summative and formative data to inform instruction and planning short and long-term - Support teams with data cycles, data collection systems, data analysis tools, etc. - Create Interim Formative Assessment Reporting Documents for increased home-school communication. 	

Professional Responsibilities

% of time organizes budgets and ordering supplies at the building and district level. Includes preparing summer curriculum writing budget

1%

% of time coordinates work with other instructional personnel to improve educational outcomes for students (ie, Reading/math specialists, tutors, interventionists, special education teachers, TESOL teachers, and other support staff)

5%

% of time working with district and school administrators to review school/district data and monitor/adjust school improvement plans.

4%

% of time working on other role-specific professional responsibilities:

3%

- preparing and distributing standard or consumable science supplies
- planning/managing STEAM EXPO students
- maintaining science safety training/protocols and communicating allergy risks to stakeholders
- registration/communications K-8
- monitoring data for math placement grades 5-8
- coordination with HS Math School
- scheduling, organizing, and communicating with counselors, parents, and students for High Dosage Tutorage Program
- preparing for district Literacy Nights, Math Nights
- maintaining book inventories

% of time engaging in professional learning:

3%

- Train the trainer model by learning new program resources, software technologies, instructional strategies, etc.
- Research and reading in the content area
- Research / Vetting / piloting new math programs / resources
- Participating in professional organizations, attending /presenting at conferences
- Participating in Learning Rounds

% of time spent in travel/communications

2%

% of time spent on scheduling and logistics

2%

Bethel Board of Education
 Medical and Prescription Drug Expenses

FYB	07/01/2024 Current	UHC Renewal	07/01/2025 Partnership	Self-Funded
MEDICAL & PRESCRIPTION DRUG				
Medical/Prescription Drug Premium	\$8,893,000	\$11,828,000	\$12,298,000	N/A
Medical Claims				\$7,643,400
Prescription Drug Claims				\$2,539,500
Prescription Drug Rebates				(\$507,900)
ASO & Network Access Fees				\$169,400
Individual Stop Loss Premium (Med/Rx) @ \$150,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$974,300
Aggregate Stop Loss Premium (Med/Rx) (125%)				\$21,200
HSA Contributions	\$600,000	\$600,000	N/A	\$600,000
Comparative Research (PCORI) Fee				\$3,500
Connecticut State Vaccination Assessment	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$27,700
Total Medical & Prescription Drug	\$9,493,000	\$12,428,000	\$12,298,000	\$11,471,100
Cost Comparison				
FYE 2026 vs. FYE 2025				
Dollar (\$) Change		\$2,935,000	\$2,805,000	\$1,978,100
Percentage (\$) Change		30.9%	29.5%	20.8%
FYE 2026 Fully Insured vs. Partnership & Self-Funded				
Dollar (\$) Change			(\$130,000)	(\$956,900)
Percentage (\$) Change			-1.0%	-7.7%

Recommended Reserves	
Claims Fluctuation Margin (5%)	\$509,100
IBNR	\$742,800

Self-Funded + Reserves	\$12,723,000
vs. FYE 2025	34.0%
vs. UHC Renewal	2.4%

Notes:

- Projections are based on active enrollment assumptions of 100 employee only, 50 two-person and 200 family contracts for the entire fiscal year at the direction of the Board. In addition, projections include 3 retired contracts as reported by UHC.
- FYE 2025 expenses for Medical and Prescription Drug reflect premium rates effective July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 and include the projected HSA contributions made by the Board.
- UnitedHealthcare FYE 2026 expenses reflect the initial proposed UHC renewal rate increase of 33.0%. The expenses also include the projected HSA contributions made by the Board.
- CT Partnership Plan FYE 2026 assumes a preliminary 13.0% increase to current Partnership medical and prescription drug rates and that all retirees are under 65.
- Self-funded medical and RX claims projections are based on experience for the period November 1, 2023 through October 31, 2024 provided by UnitedHealthcare and an assumed annual trend of 8.0% and 12.0%, respectively. Projections also include adjustments for large claimants with combined medical and prescription drug claims over \$150,000.
- The self-funded claim projections are shown on a mature basis for comparison purposes. Year 1 claims would be immature but it is recommended to budget at the mature basis in order to generate needed IBNR and claims fluctuation reserves for the self-funded plan.
 - The recommended IBNR Claim Reserve assumes 1 month lag for the medical plan and 0.5 months of lag for prescription drug plan.
 - It is recommended that a margin of 5% be added to the projected costs to account for claim volatility resulting from high claimants and normal month-to-month variances in paid claims.
- Prescription drug rebates have been estimated as 20% of projected claims based on rebates for similar size groups self-funding prescription drug coverage on a standalone basis.
- The ASO and Network Access Fees are assumed to be \$40.00 PEPM. The Individual and Aggregate Stop Loss Premiums have been estimated to be \$230.00 and \$5.00 PEPM, respectively, based on benchmarking data of groups with similar characteristics. PCORI and CT Immunization fees shown are set by the government and are assumed to be \$3.47 and \$27.25 PMPY, respectively.
- This analysis does not consider the change in costs for dental or vision benefits as a result of a potential change to Partnership, furthermore, employee cost-sharing is not considered.
- The projections in this report are estimates of future costs and are based on information available to Segal at the time the projections were made. Segal has not audited the information provided. Projections are not a guarantee of future results. Actual experience may differ due to, but not limited to, such variables as changes in the regulatory environment, local market pressure, health trend rates and claims volatility. The accuracy and reliability of health projections decrease as the projection period increases. The projections do not reflect the potential impact of any future changes due to health care reform legislation, other than those noted or previously adopted.
- Projection of retiree costs takes into account only the dollar value of providing benefits for current retirees during the period referred to in the projection. It does not reflect the present value of any future retiree benefits for active, disabled or terminated employees during a period other than that which is referred to in the projection, nor does it reflect any anticipated increase in the number of those eligible for retiree benefits, or any changes that may occur in the nature of benefits over time.
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