

**FY 23 Budget
January 18 Budget Questions
RTM EDUCATION**

#	Question	Response
RTM ED		
1	<p>New Canaan is spending ~\$1k or 4% less per student or \$[4.6]m if using Darien school district enrollment. Perhaps a tough question without understanding NC's budget detail, but in general does the administration feel Darien is providing additional services/more educational choices to students compared to NC?</p>	<p>There are a variety of differences between Darien's budget and New Canaan. For example, technology purchases in New Canaan are considered capital expenditures whereas in Darien they are operating expenditures. This reduces New Canaan's per pupil expenditure. Darien also has team teaching, which New Canaan does not. New Canaan also has BYOD at the high school whereas up until the current recommended budget Darien did not. Excess Cost is an addition in the EFS report, which calculates the NFEP and in New Canaan Excess Cost is not credited to the BOE budget, which is another difference. Additionally, this year Darien received over \$500k more in federal aid than New Canaan, which is also added to our per pupil.</p>
2	<p>Please provide a list of reasons for leaving (retirement, lateral move, etc.) in a summary form, if available.</p>	<p>More and more teachers are leaving the profession, whether by resignation or retirement, due to the added pressure of teaching during the pandemic. We are also experiencing a significant shortage of teachers. This allows teachers more flexibility in seeking positions closer to home; some of those districts are offering additional step credit so that the salary schedules are more competitive with Darien. We are also seeing more and more teachers leaving to teach in Westchester where salaries are significantly higher. We have also worked with several teachers who have not been a good fit in the District.</p>

3	<p>What are the sources of new teachers – teachers’ colleges, other school systems? Please provide a list of education (BA, MA, PhD) and relevant experience (public/private, states, years of experience) of new teachers in a summary format.</p>	<p>We have hired teachers from many different sources, including teacher preparatory schools, other districts in both Connecticut and New York, the Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) program, the Minority Teacher in Residence program through CREC and the Fairfield Teacher Agency, which connects teachers with potential employing districts based on postings. The teacher pays a fee for this service. We are reaching out to new institutions this year, including Marist and Fordham, to establish relationships for student teachers, which is an excellent way to recruit new hires. 55% of our teachers are at Masters, Step 19. Another 20% are at Masters 30, Step 19. We do not keep information such as years of public vs private education experience in a format that would allow us to answer this part of the question. The Superintendent, per the teachers’ contract, may give salary credit for both public and private school teaching whether it is in Connecticut or in other states. We advertise for each position to the broadest extent possible, through multiple hiring platforms and in multiple states. We interview multiple candidates with varied backgrounds because our experience has been that some of our most successful teachers join us with very different prior experience, both in and out of education.</p>
4	<p>What is the average teacher tenure in the school district in each of the last 3 years and for the budgeted year?</p>	<p>The average tenure in Darien is 11 years. This has remained constant over the past few years. We are not able to retrieve this information for previous years.</p>
5	<p>What have you learned from exit interviews, other than Covid driven resignations?</p>	<p>There is a teacher shortage throughout the nation and Connecticut is no exception. There is a high demand for teachers and teachers have greater flexibility in where they decide to teach. Teachers are seeking positions closer to home and some of those districts are offering additional step credit so that the salary schedules are more</p>

		<p>competitive with Darien. We are also seeing more and more teachers leaving to teach in Westchester where salaries are significantly higher. We have also worked with several teachers who have not been a good fit in the District.</p>
6	<p>Provide an update on the Teacher in Residence program. Will the two teachers in residence this year remain or will others be recruited?</p>	<p>The Teacher in Residence program has been a great success this year. Both of our teachers are doing a fantastic job. They have been observed by the building principals, Central Services staff and representatives from CREC, the organization that coordinates the program. The feedback has been extremely positive. At the end of the current school year both Teachers in Residence will be eligible for certification as elementary teachers. The District is required to offer them positions if there are positions available. The District will be thrilled to offer both teachers positions if they become available. The proposed budget includes funds to support two additional Teachers in Residence for next year.</p>
7	<p>Given the recent increase in residential developments, and proposed new build, what metrics are being used to determine the growth rate? What has been the percentage of growth per year since these new developments became occupied? How confident are we in the classroom growth projections?</p>	<p>K-5 enrollment has declined 6.5% over the last ten years and 4% over the last five years.</p> <p>MMS enrollment has declined 5% over the last ten years and 3.5% over the last five years.</p> <p>HS enrollment has increased 7% over the last ten years and 2% over the last five years.</p> <p>In years in which the district has used a demographer the projections have been over 99% accurate, while the years in which the district's in house enrollment model has been used have been 96% accurate. Given staffing is the most expensive part of your budget, this level of accuracy is the driving reason why all districts in our DRG use a demographer each year.</p>

8	<p>What is the demand for the China program? What happens to the money if the program is not used?</p>	<p>If the program is not used the money remains unspent in the accounts (Curriculum Supervision and Other Student Activities in RC1) and is returned back to the Town at the end of the year or the BOE could choose to transfer the funds to an unbudgeted but necessary need.</p>
9	<p>Genius Hour: is it mandatory for all middle school children?</p>	<p>Yes, all students at MMS will participate in Genius Hour one day per month during an extended Flex period.</p>
10	<p>Can we get more details on how the funds would be used?</p>	<p>The funds would be used to provide materials to students for their flex time work and the Genius Hour Fair. The cost was based on an average of \$15 per student. Some expenditures for student work are posters, models of their area of study, materials for a theater production, cooking or baking products, books for a book club, construction materials or an app for composition.</p>
11	<p>What would the metrics for a successful program entail? (recital, final project, fair, extra credit?)</p>	<p>Genius Hour would culminate in a project fair where students share their findings with their peers using a variety of media. For example, students focusing on a music or theater topic might share a small original performance, students working on poetry or creative writing would share samples of their work, students studying a science topic might present a poster session or model and experiment. There will also be opportunities for students to share their learning with families.</p>
12	<p>Is this at all affiliated with the IDEA consultant's recommendation or an extension thereof?</p>	<p>The addition of Genius Hour supports the recommendation from the gifted education evaluation to provide opportunities for enrichment for all students.</p>

<p>13</p>	<p>Outdoor Classroom: this is not included in this budget however it was mentioned on Jan 6th; what will be the approach to introducing new topics with future budget impact? Given that the RTM focuses on the budget once a year, it can be helpful to our broader membership for these topics to be introduced (as was done here with Outdoor classrooms, Open Choice last year). We are cognizant that some members of the Board of Ed. may prefer to not discuss these topics as part of the budget, if there is not a specific request, but please note that many members of the RTM membership will find it helpful if these major topics are “introduced” and discussed prior to a formal request for funding. To put it plainly, many of us applaud the administration for talking about these ideas early.</p>	<p>We plan to discuss the Outdoor Classroom at a future Facilities Committee meeting. We would expect items to first be discussed at the appropriate committee level then the Board of Education.</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>Have we explored the idea of doing a kindergarten screen for dyslexia? If so, what would it cost to add?</p>	<p>Our current general instruction and SRBI programs provide opportunities for teachers to monitor student learning and make recommendations for additional intervention and support when necessary. Kindergarten screening for dyslexia has not been explored.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Gifted program: has the program evolved from its original inception when it was strictly language based to a more science/math approach? If so, how do we make this program known to more students who could then</p>	<p>Students who participate in the District’s Gifted Education program are identified through a process. The program has evolved since its inception and will continue to do so as the newly established steering committee reviews the Gifted Evaluation from 2021 and provides oversight of program enhancements. All students are screened for program placement but only a small percentage are identified as</p>

	apply? Should the program become popular, do we have enough existing resources? Do we turn kids away?	gifted learners. Opportunities to provide enrichment for all, like Genius Hour, are designed to provide students with engaging learning experiences regardless of their gifted identification status.
16	Can the district recommend a policy such that a team's roster number is determined by the district/admin and not only by the coach?	There are a variety of factors that determine the number of students on any team. In all instances coach's preference is only one of many factors that the District uses to determine the appropriate roster size.
17	CABE: what services does this subscription offer to our BoE?	CABE represents nearly all boards of education across Connecticut. They provide professional development, policy support, advocacy, workshops, and professional searches.
18	Reimagining the Library"? What is the current status of this initiative given there are no costs shown?	The district is planning to discuss this at a future Curriculum Committee meeting to discuss the future plans.
19	Given Special Education represents more than 20% of the full education budget, could we see some level of audit on how current resources are being used (how many students/week)? What population of the school student population is using these services? How well are these services marketed within the school? What threshold needs to be met before bringing on an additional resource?	<p>Resources are used to support special education teachers, speech and language pathologists, psychologists, social workers, paraprofessionals, occupational therapists, physical therapists, BCBA's, tuition, transportation, professional development, and contracted service providers.</p> <p>The PPT recommends services including the frequency and duration of the services annually. Staffing and allocation of services are based on student need on the building level.</p> <p>Additional personnel is required when the PPT recommended services cannot be delivered by the current staff.</p>

		<p>The most recent SEDAC reporting represents 873 students receiving special education services, approximately 18 percent of the total student population.</p> <p>There is no threshold number that determines additional resources. Resources are determined by PPT recommendations.</p>
20	<p>CES -we currently do not have a representative on this council, can we correct this (must be a current BoE member)?</p>	<p>The Superintendent & Board Chair will coordinate a BOE CES representative.</p>