



**Spaulding High School
Central Vermont Career Center
Barre City Elementary and Middle School
Barre Town Middle and Elementary School**

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A rock solid education for a lifetime of discovery

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Dear BUUSD Finance Committee,

As we prepare to present the FY25 BUUSD budget to the community, we thought it would be helpful to take the opportunity to provide a summary of how salaries and wages are set in our district. We shared a similar document with the board and the community last year, and it was warmly received. Please take a look, and if there are questions and/or suggestions, we can make changes before sharing this out with the community.

First, here are the basics of how salaries and benefits will impact the proposed FY25 budget:

BUUSD Salary, Wages, and Benefits Information

Salary, wages and benefits **\$40,825,760** are the highest contributing factor to the overall budget, **74%**. The BUUSD is the largest employer in Barre.

- **Salary & Wages (Proposed FY25 budget)**
 - Total salary/wages are **\$30,502,287** or an increase of **\$3,291,822**, this is a 12% increase from last year. This 12% reflects increases in our most recently ratified CBAs, increases for administrators and non-contracted positions, and any proposed new positions. This is an overall increase to the budget of 5.9%.

- **Benefits**
 - **Health premiums** increased **16.4%** based on recommendation from VEHI, **\$5,879,267** or an increase of **\$898,077**.
 - **Other benefits** (dental, HRA, HSA, Cash in lieu, life, LTD, FICA/Med, VMERS, VSTRS health assessment, etc.), **\$4,594,207** or an increase of **\$137,979**. The overall benefit increase is an increase to the budget of 1.9%.
 - Adjustments were made to reflect actual group health plans in each department, previously these were reflected in general instruction lines only.

Next, the following breaks down positions into specific categories while explaining how each of these categories is compensated.

Collectively Bargained Contracts

The first three categories are fairly straightforward as they are all part of negotiated collective bargaining agreements. These salaries and hourly wages are negotiated between the school board and each bargaining unit. The three categories are:

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

This bargaining unit consists primarily of our custodial and maintenance staff, though there are a few others who fall into this contract as well. I can report that these folks received wage increases in negotiations during the summer of 2022, and their new contract is good through 2026.

BUUSD Para Educators

These folks are our lowest paid employees in the district, and I can report that the para-educators and the school board settled on a new contract this past summer that will take us to 2026. I am happy to report that these negotiations resulted in more competitive wages for our paras that bring them more closely in line with our neighbors and provide them with a more livable wage.

BUUSD Teachers

The school board and teachers also settled on a new contract this summer that will take us to 2026. By "teachers," we mean all professional faculty who require an educators license to hold their position. In addition to teachers, this category includes counselors, academic interventionists, nurses, and various other licensed positions. Historically, our teacher's salaries have not been competitively in line with those of our neighbors, but this new contract is definitely a step in the right direction.

Non-Contracted Staff and BUUSD Administration

The next three categories are less straightforward, and their salaries and wages are not negotiated by the board and instead are set by the superintendent (with the exception of the superintendent salary, which is set by the school board.) Historically, these salaries and wages have not been competitive in relation to our neighbors, and there have been inconsistencies within each category as well. In addition to the challenge of recruiting new employees, there was a fairness issue. Because BUUSD rates did not keep up with the standard rates, we were hiring people that made as much or more than our existing staff. We have made significant progress in making these positions more competitively and fairly compensated in the last two years. The three categories are:

Non Contracted Hourly Staff

This category covers a wide variety of positions with different levels of skills and experience needed to be successful in the job. None of these positions fall under any of the Collective Bargaining Agreements. As such, these wages are set by the superintendent. We now have this category broken down into an hourly wage hiring metric with five sub categories, with category A being the lowest and category E being the highest.

There were inconsistencies in terms of how people were being paid in these non contracted positions, and we set out to make the new wage metric fair and easy to understand. For example, if a person's position fell into Category C and they had five years related experience, they would be set at a rate of \$23.01 per hour. We discovered that some people's wages were about where they should be, and others were off and needed to be increased. As a result, some folks in this category got additional increases in the last few years, and some did not. This metric made things clear and fair for all, and made setting salaries upon hiring a much more objective process. Additionally, this wage metric puts these essential positions in the range of how similar positions are paid in our neighboring districts. However, the metric is now two years old and will need to be looked at again as we prepare for FY26.

Non Contracted Salaried Staff

This category also covers a fairly wide variety of positions, and the salary schedule for them is similar to that of the teachers contract. Employees in these professional positions do not require an educator's license to be in them, but the requirements of the position require a specific skill set unique to the job. Many people in these positions have training and backgrounds that are different from or go beyond the traditional bachelors/masters degree path typically needed to be a professional educator. Like the hourly positions above, we discovered discrepancies in fairness and in terms of how similar positions were paid in other districts and outside agencies. As a result, some folks in this category got additional increases in the last few years, and some did not. Though people in this category get similar benefits to those found in the teacher CBA, it's important to note that they do not qualify for contributions to the Vermont State Teachers Retirement System.

BUUSD Administration

Much like our non-contracted employees, we discovered that BUUSD administrative salaries were both inconsistent and too often not in a competitive place in relation to our neighbors. A salary metric based on administrative responsibilities and years of experience was put in place to correct this. Some administrators did indeed get additional increases for FY23 and FY24, and many did not. This topic had been discussed in the district for many years, and the current competitive nature of finding school leaders in Vermont and across the country forced us to no longer be able to kick this one down the road.

Salaries were compared to other similar positions within school districts in our region, and we continue to do so. In addition, the VT Department of Labor comparisons were used for those positions not directly related to academics (facilities, human resources, communications,

finance, etc.). As proposed, the BUUSD currently has administrative salaries at least in the ballpark of where our neighbors are for most positions, but not all. However, this metric is also two years old and will need to be looked at again as we prepare for FY26.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any other questions or would like more information, please let me know.

Chris