



Barre Unified Union School District

**Spaulding High School
Spaulding Educational Alternatives
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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February 16, 2024

Dear BUUSD Community,

I am reaching out to update everyone on the latest with Act 127 and how the expected revisions to the law will impact our school budget and our taxes. The situation across the state has been very changeable and uncertain, but our goal here is to give you the most up to date and accurate information available.

Things could still change, but our goal with the following questions/answers is to give you everything you need to make an informed vote on March 5. (If you haven't seen our "[Let's Learn About Education Finance Terms](#)" video yet, please take the time so you can become familiar with some of the terms that will follow.)

How will the Act 127 revisions impact our taxes?

What will my tax bill look like with these new revisions? We have updated our "[Let's Learn About the FY25 Budget and Tax Rates](#)" video to reflect the impact of the revisions to the law. You will see that tax bills will be going down from what we shared a few weeks ago, assuming things don't change significantly before this law goes to the governor next week.

Why did the legislature decide to revise Act 127?

The law was well intentioned and meant to directly help districts like ours that were historically underfunded by making paying for Vermont schools more fair and equitable. The change to how students were weighted had a direct and positive impact on us by more accurately weighing the costs of educating Barre's students, primarily due to the high number of economically disadvantaged families we serve. In our view, we had been under-counted for many years, and the new law was a start to correcting this.

Unfortunately, the 5% cap that was put in place to ease the burden on districts disadvantaged by the law led to many districts raising their education spending by 20% or more (some were as high as 50%). These increases put a huge burden on the state education fund, which led to the legislature needing to go back to the drawing board and remove the cap. *To be clear, the BUUSD was not part of this problem;* education spending for our FY25 budget has gone up about 10%, putting us near the bottom of all districts in Vermont. Our community can rest assured that we created a needs based budget that respected the intent of the law without taking needless advantage of it.

How do the proposed changes to Act 127 impact the BUUSD?

With the 5% cap no longer in play, there will now be a cent- based "discount" to the tax rates themselves. The amount of the discount is based on our share of equalized pupils - the weighted numbers (LTWADM -

see below) assigned to students based on their likely cost to effectively educate - statewide and is provided to us by the Agency of Education. You will see below that this revision to the law will actually help us with a 3 cent discount to our already low tax rate.

How does the Yield impact the BUUSD?

The dollar yield is set by the tax department and has a significant impact on our tax rate. The new transition mechanism in Act 127 will likely cause the dollar yield to increase. When the dollar yield increases, tax rates decrease. The professional organizations representing school boards and superintendents communicated to the House Ways and Means Committee this past week the importance of increasing the dollar yield, and we anticipate that the yield will not go down by the time the legislature finishes up later this spring.

How did going from "Equalized Pupils" to "Long Term Weighted Average Daily Membership" impact the BUUSD?

There are no changes to this formula with the Act 127 revisions, but we know this topic has been a source of confusion for people in our community and across Vermont. If the BUUSD student count has been steadily between 2100 and 2300 students in recent years, how could we make a huge jump to over 3700 students in only one year? And how does this impact us? To be clear, the LTWADM of just over 3700 students is not our student count; this number is a reflection of how our students are counted in terms of how much it costs to educate them. The jump of nearly 1500 students is a more accurate way to count the high number of economically disadvantaged students in our community, and this number is set by the state.

An excellent presentation was made by Julia Richter at the Joint Fiscal Office last week regarding how Act 127's change in pupil weights influenced districts differently. I found this presentation very helpful. If you are eager to better understand this, it will be worth your time. You can find it here: [Joint Fiscal Office Presentation](#)

When Do We Vote on the BUUSD Budget?

The legislature is giving permission for districts to re-warn their budgets given all the changes being considered, however the BUUSD School Board and Administration see no advantage to doing so. As I said above, we have created a needs based budget that respects the intent of the law, and the revisions being considered will work in our favor.

Ballots are already arriving in the mail for those who choose to vote by absentee ballot, and Town Meeting Day is on **Tuesday, March 5**. For this election, you will be voting for new BUUSD school board members and the BUUSD FY25 budget. Municipal elections for both Barre City and Barre Town will be taking place on Tuesday, May 14.

That is it for now! We understand how complex this all is and how everyone has legitimate concerns about our taxes. If you are looking for more information, please visit www.buUSD.org/budget to get all the details on our FY25 budget. I would also welcome people reaching out if you have any questions. Many of you already have, and your questions have been very helpful in guiding the way we explain this budget process to our community. Thank you for that.

Sincerely,
Chris Hennessey