

Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
WORKSHOP #1
2025-26 BUDGET
January 14, 2025

Board member's initials & Q #	<i>QUESTIONS</i>	<i>ANSWERS</i>
1. BB	We are often told that in businesses, when new initiatives are created they also look at current practices and eliminate anything deemed not to be working effectively. Have we done that, and do we have an answer for that question?	Unlike a business, our customers are students. If they are not progressing, we invest more in them, we do not reduce.
2. BB	Is there any plan to explore early retirement incentives?	<p>In accordance with contract language, certified staff, hired prior to July 1, 2013, will receive a payment of \$1,400. Certified staff are required to notify the HR department prior to January 5 in order to receive the incentive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To date, we have 7 staff who notified us of their intent to retire in June 2025. ● We have 1 staff who notified us of their retirement after the January 5 deadline. ● We have 16 staff with 30+ years of service. 9 of them are in shortage areas which could prove to be difficult to fill and most likely would result in hiring staff at higher salary levels, thus reducing dollars anticipated through attrition. If they retire, and in accordance with contract language, they may remain on our insurance until 65, but are responsible for full pay.
3. BB	Are there any plans to explore more solar energy options?	We are in the process of adding solar on the new section of roof at SHS. When this is completed we will consider adding solar to other properties.

**Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut**

<p>4. BB</p>	<p>Para- Professional Development. Is that mandated?</p>	<p>Effective the 2023-24 school year, the General Assembly revised state law requiring BOEs to make available 18 hours of PD for paras.</p> <p>In accordance with contract language, we already provide between 6.25 hrs (staff who work less than 27.5 hrs/wk) and 18.5 hrs (staff who work 27.5+ hrs/wk) of training.</p> <p>However, within the mandated 18 hours, you cannot include the annual mandated trainings that are required for our paras (sexual harassment, title IX, bloodborne pathogens, etc). The 18 additional hours occur on selected early release Tuesday afternoons when students are dismissed. The paras are paid to attend their professional development sessions during these times to meet the 18 hour requirement.</p>
<p>5. BB</p>	<p>Could you tell us the non-certified positions eliminated?</p>	<p>When reviewing the staffing during December, we had vacant positions in the paraprofessional and ABA Therapist groups. Those positions were eliminated.</p>
<p>6. JW</p>	<p>The 2023-24 actual spending in the substitute line is over budget \$521K. How are we tracking now on the substitute budget? Where is the offset?</p>	<p>In the FY 24-25 year, we have encumbered the salaries for the building substitutes and any known long term subs based on their scheduled days (i.e. 5 days/week or 3 days/week). Daily subs are paid as they work and are not encumbered. As of the 1/10/25 payroll, the substitute lines are over budget by \$481K (including the encumbrance through June for the building subs).</p> <p>The offset to the over budget substitute line falls in the certified teacher account savings from staff vacancies across the district. A small increase is requested to this line item as the minimum wage in CT increases annually.</p>
<p>7. JW</p>	<p>What was our health insurance increase last year?</p>	<p>FY 24-25 budget has a final increase in health insurance of 5.87% or \$947,876. The initial superintendent version for FY 24-25 requested an increase of 8.8% or an increase of \$1,421,476 based on the budget set by the Self Insurance Committee in December of 2023.</p> <p>The budget set by the self insurance committee is funded partially by the employee's cost share. The employee contributions are variable year over year due to the number of employees participating in the health plan.</p>

**Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut**

<p>8. JB</p>	<p>\$2.9 million in health insurance increase. Will it come down a little bit?</p>	<p>We expect the Self Insurance Committee to review the claims through November (or possibly December if available from Anthem) on January 22nd. They may vote to take action on a budget funding level at that meeting.</p>
<p>9. JW</p>	<p>Electricity is low. Do we feel comfortable?</p>	<p>The budget is set with the assistance of the energy consultant, however we know that the KW usage is variable. A new supply contract was signed effective November 2024. The first EverSource monthly invoices with the higher supply cost have been received. We will continue to monitor the monthly actual expenditures to the amounts encumbered on each account.</p> <p>Actual expenditures for electricity in FY 23-24 were \$1,523,191 (accounts 32120 and 82321). The budget for FY 24-25 is \$ 1,737,239 and the requested budget for FY 25-26 is \$1,823,928.</p>
<p>10. CC</p>	<p>Are we seeing a decrease in magnet school tuition?</p>	<p>This line item is driven by enrollment in magnet schools which has decreased, particularly since the pandemic. The FY 25-26 budget was calculated at the 58% tuition rate - consistent with the FY 24-25 budget.</p>
<p>11. JW</p>	<p>Is the 5 year refresh the replacement cycle?</p>	<p>Account 32324 Replaces Smartboards with Interactive displays (Projectors) (8 to 10 year replacement plan) Computer Labs (7 year) Switches (7 year) Wifi Access Points (5 to 7 year)</p> <p>Account 54400 Staff Laptop (5 year) Chromebook Replacement (4 years assigned to students 3 years in a classroom set) - TS</p>
<p>12. CW</p>	<p>MP&E, on the summary page, did we move the line item.</p>	<p>The smartboards with interactive displays were funded under the MP&E in FY 24-25 in the amount of \$70,600. In May 2024, the district was awarded a PEGPETIA grant in the amount of \$20,400 allowing us to reduce the operating budget for smart boards from \$91,000 using the grant amount of \$20,400. For 25-26, we moved the request for the replacement cycle for the smartboards to Account 32324 - District wide Computer Hardware in FY 25-26 since we feel it is a required operating expenditure. The same account will be used going forward.</p>

**Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut**

<p>13. TC</p>	<p>When talking about scheduling, are we only going to have 2.4 teachers added?</p> <p>Are we making certain that we are targeting the students that need extra care? Can you provide reassurance?</p> <p>Are we going to be losing teachers in the middle schools?</p>	<p>If we re-organize using the structure of the new middle school schedule we will need 2.4 teachers. If we do not use the newly proposed schedule we will require six positions.</p> <p>The middle school schedule incorporates an intervention block which will be identical in both buildings in terms of organization and time of day. This is dedicated time for students to receive targeted intervention.</p> <p>If we implement the new schedule, a reduction in “Unified Arts” teachers will occur, however that reduction offsets the needed increase in core academic areas to make the shift.</p>
<p>14. BB</p>	<p>How can the oil heat go down?</p>	<p>The district locks into a contract price to purchase oil. The rates were favorable in the Fall so we were able to lock in with a savings of \$10,000.</p>
<p>15. BB</p>	<p>Textbooks are going down. Are they still charging fees from going online?</p>	<p>Yes, there are licenses associated with textbook purchases that vary in terms of length ranging from 3 years to 5 years depending on negotiated terms. Also, these costs are not for new textbooks, they are for replacements.</p>
<p>16. JB</p>	<p>For athletic supplies (uniforms) are those rolling replacements as needed? Have we looked into public/private partnership? To help sponsor teams?</p>	<p>It is a rolling replacement. The district did seek private funding for middle school athletics in years prior and it proved to be unsustainable at which time the Board reinstated funding.</p> <p>The uniforms for the swim/dive teams along with the gymnastics teams are not returned for hygienic reasons and are an annual expense.</p>
<p>17. JW</p>	<p>We have assumed a 4% cost escalation? Does this seem adequate?</p>	<p>I believe this was referencing the budget 4% device cost increase. We are fairly confident that we can keep them to a 4% increase this year. We stress that we are looking at all possible vendors and PC models. This brings forth the most competitive pricing we can get while ensuring that staff devices are of good quality. - TS</p>

**Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut**

<p>18. CW</p>	<p>Does E-Rate only apply to cost of service cost or devices as well?</p> <p>E-Rate is federal, how do they dole out funds? Does Southington have the same opportunities?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, E-Rate does not apply to staff or student devices. We were able to obtain a limited time grant to facilitate these purchases called ECF. There are currently no plans to see another ECF round.</p> <p>E-Rate is determined by our Free and Reduced lunch numbers. This obtains us a 50% discount on Wide Area Network and Internal Network equipment.</p> <p>We have the same or similar opportunities as other towns but the district's responsible percentage (50%) will vary from town to town. - TS</p>
<p>19 BB</p>	<p>What is cut and what remains from Summer School?</p>	<p>As summer school is currently unfunded in the budget, elementary and middle level interventions will not be offered. Last summer, 93 elementary students and 33 middle school students received these services. High school credit recovery will default to a tuition based model. Last summer 35 students regained credit without charge.</p> <p>Pre-Covid Summer school was not been funded from the operating budget. The district used ARP ESSER funds for summer school the last few years. Those funds are no longer available.</p> <p>Summer school never was funded in the operating budget in Pre-Covid years.</p>
<p>20 CC</p>	<p>How many students are in Summer School/Jumpstart?</p>	<p>15 students were in Jumpstart last summer.</p>
<p>21 CC</p>	<p>What are the roles of an ABA therapists, BCBA analysts?</p>	<p>A BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) primarily works to assess and address challenging student behaviors by developing and implementing individualized behavior intervention plans, often collaborating with teachers and other staff to promote positive behavior strategies within the classroom and school-wide systems, particularly for students with special needs; they utilize data-driven approaches to analyze behaviors and track progress towards goals. Key responsibilities of a BCBA in a public school include:</p>


Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut

		<p>Conducting Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs): Observing students to understand the function of their challenging behaviors and identify potential triggers and consequences.</p> <p>Developing Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP): Creating personalized plans based on FBA results, outlining specific strategies to address problematic behaviors and teach desired skills.</p> <p>Positive Behavior Support (PBS): Implementing school-wide PBS systems to promote positive behaviors and create a supportive learning environment.</p> <p>Collaborating with teachers and staff: Providing training and support to educators on how to implement behavior interventions within the classroom.</p> <p>Data collection and analysis: Monitoring student progress through data collection and using this information to adjust interventions as needed.</p> <p>IEP participation: Contributing expertise on behavioral needs during Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.</p> <p>Supervising ABA Therapists: Overseeing the work of ABAs who directly implement behavior interventions with students.</p> <p>ABA therapist is a professional trained in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) who works to provide individualized support to students with behavioral or learning challenges, focusing on improving academic performance, social skills, and managing challenging behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies tailored to each student's needs; they collaborate closely with teachers and other school staff to create effective</p>
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**Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut**

		behavior intervention plans (BIPs) and monitor student progress.
22. JW	The increase for Spec-Ed transportation is high (83332, 83335). Is this associated with the cost of the new contract?	There are many variables that are considered but the cost of the new contract is the primary reason for the increase.
23 JW	For out of town transportation, could we see the run rate of how we are tracking the current budget?	<p>Out-of-town transportation costs are highly variable, depending on each student's specific needs and the distance involved. We strive to secure the most cost-effective solution on a case-by-case basis, which can range from parent transportation to lift-equipped vehicles with an aide.</p> <p>For the 2023-24 school year, the average cost per student was \$28,303, with a low of \$8,800 and a high of \$120,741.</p> <p>In the 2024-25 school year, the average cost per student has increased to \$33,790, with a low of \$11,475 and a high of \$87,021.</p> <p>So far this year, we have encumbered and spent \$2,257,075 out of the \$2,293,799 allocated budget, leaving a balance of \$36,724.</p>
24 JB	<p>For 83370, how are we on track for this year, and are running the risk of getting hit again?</p> <p>Are there a number of students that account for that category? Can I have that number?</p>	<p>We currently have 55 students outplaced for this school year. Each student is evaluated annually and the possibility exists to bring students back into the district. Based on the current information that we have surrounding these students and our initial internal excess cost analysis we are proposing the reduction at this time.</p>

**Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut**

<p>25 CC</p>	<p>How many students do we have now in preschool? What is going on with it next year and it's impact?</p>	<p>3 y.o.students with IEPs – 31 (9 - B-3 Referrals or pending evaluations to date) 4 y.o. students with IEPS - 35 (2 pending evaluations) 5 y.o. students with IEPS – 10</p> <p>=====</p> <p>Total Students with IEPs Attending the Integrated Preschool: 76 (with 11 in referral)</p> <p>Students receiving itinerant speech services – 27</p> <p>=====</p> <p>Total PK students with IEPs: 103 (with 11 in referral)</p> <p>Community Peers: 3 y.o. community peers – 22 4 y.o. community peers – 30 5 y.o. community peers – 6</p> <p>=====</p> <p>Total community peers - 58</p> <p>Total number of PK students registered with SPS: 161 (with 11 in referral)</p> <p>Next year there will be no grant funding for those who are denied the waiver. Those families will have to pay tuition in order to enroll their child in preschool.</p>
<p>26 ZO</p>	<p>Can you explain what poor vehicle condition is? Specifically the 1999 F250.</p>	<p>The vehicle is used primarily by a laborer who performs the field maintenance. The vehicle remains in-town. The doors have been patched and rehung. It has an extensive amount of rust. The staff has continually replaced portions of the floorboard.</p> 

Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut

		 <p style="text-align: center;">Driver's side floorboard at door jamb</p>
<p>27 BB</p>	<p>Was the re-locking of the keys a safety issue?</p>	<p>This is more of an efficiency issue for coming out of lockdowns if ever required. All doors have functioning, locking cylinders at this time. This request is for cylinders and keys for the interior doors, not exterior, at SHS. There have been multiple additions and renovations at SHS, each introducing different door hardware and key systems which the administration and custodians must manage. Some staff members are required to carry multiple keys. This request is year two of a multi-year project. The request is for material funding only. Our in-house carpenter is collaborating with administration to consolidate keys to a single grandmaster system. Reducing the number of keys will decrease the total number distributed. It will also simplify the process for first responders during a lockdown release.</p>
<p>28 TC</p>	<p>Do we have a grant writer?</p>	<p>“As needed part-time” hourly grant writer continues to exist.</p>

**Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut**

<p>29 CC</p>	<p>Why is the Ag-Sci grant split between two lines?</p>	<p>The district receives the ASTE grant from the state. The first \$373,400 of the grant is recorded by the Town. The remainder comes to the schools. The new line for the Ed Reform grant represents the 42% of the tuition not billed to the sending districts in the current year.</p>
<p>30 ZO</p>	<p>The state has consistently fallen short of their stated funding requirements. What are our options to force them to meet these requirements?</p>	<p>Continued lobbying through our professional organizations. CABE, CAPSS and CASBO, all of which we are members of, have been consistently at the forefront of this. Additionally, the superintendent communicates regularly with our delegate on the education committee and is currently working to support a bill to assist with funding relative to special education costs. That bill has been introduced. The district is not aware of a mechanism beyond this.</p>
<p>31 ZO</p>	<p>With the range of services we offer in district, how many outplaced students have we been able to bring back into district from last year to this year and how much has that saved us in outplacement costs (net less the cost in district)</p>	<p>We were able to return 10 students. The total transportation and tuition for these 10 was \$879,460.04. The approximate in district cost to program for these 10 students is \$279,667.88. Net difference in savings is approximately \$599,792.16</p>
<p>32 ZO</p>	<p>Is the decrease in poverty level numbers based on actual increased income of existing residents, or is that a result of higher income folks moving into town</p>	<p>The answer is that it can be a combination of any of the following as calculated annually. Relative to Title 1 funding, the calculated poverty rate used for Title I funding is based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, specifically the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program. This data provides annual estimates of poverty for school-age children (ages 5–17) within a school district.</p> <p>Improved Local Economic Conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If household incomes have risen for existing families, fewer children qualify as living below the poverty line. <p>Demographic Changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If higher-income families have moved into Southington, they increase the total number of children without increasing the poverty count, thus lowering the poverty rate.

**Southington Public Schools
Southington, Connecticut**

		<p>Outmigration of Lower-Income Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If families experiencing poverty have left the district due to housing costs or other factors, the poverty count may decrease. <p>Data Updates and Methodology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Census Bureau periodically refines its estimates, and small shifts in methodology or reporting can impact a district's reported poverty rate.
<p>33 CC</p>	<p>You referenced the state share for education funding being lower than other states. Where does Connecticut fall relative to its contribution percentage for education funding compared to other states?</p>	<p>As of January 2025, the most recent comprehensive data available on public school funding by state is for the 2020–21 school year. Detailed data for the 2022–23 school year has not yet been released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).</p> <p>As of that year, Connecticut ranked 45th out of 50 states with only 5 other states providing less education funding than Connecticut.</p> <p>Source: National Center for Education Statistics</p>

END OF WORKSHOP #1