



Thetford Town
SCHOOL DISTRICT

ANNUAL
REPORT

2024-25

Welcome

From the OESU Superintendent

As you may know, Thetford Elementary School belongs to the Orange East Supervisory Union, while Thetford Academy does not. However, these two schools share connections that go beyond the simple labels of public and independent institutions. Their relationship is defined by numerous commonalities, with the most significant being the students.

Thinking of one school without the other offers an incomplete view of how children in this community are educated. The journey of teaching and learning—from a child's first steps into a classroom at Thetford Elementary to the moment they cross the stage at graduation—is not divided by classroom, grade, school, or designation. It is woven together, centered on the growth of each student. While differences exist in how the schools operate and are perceived, they are far more alike than different. Often, it is within these perceived differences that our deepest connections become evident, reminding us that diversity is a vital source of strength for our community.

How truly wonderful it is that these schools are connected by what matters

most—not just to each of us individually, but to all of us collectively. It is not the buildings that give life to the students; rather, it is the students who breathe life into the brick and mortar, reflecting the spirit of the community and the people within it. The school buildings serve as mirrors, revealing who our students are and all they contribute. Furthermore, the caring, kind, thoughtful, and hardworking educators—including everyone who works in both schools—serve as the polish for these mirrors, ensuring that the positive qualities and contributions of our students shine brightly, enriching both our schools and the wider community.

This note is a sincere thank you to everyone who supports our students, educators, and schools, each contributing in their own way to complete the beautiful puzzle of education in Thetford.



Sincerely,

Randy Gawel
OESU SUPERINTENDENT



Message from the School Board

Welcome to the Thetford School District. Your elementary school is in good hands this year under the guidance of our new principal, Caitlin Toleno; our new Dean of Students, Tori Benson; and the amazing and wonderful teachers and support staff who show up every day to learn, play, and grow alongside your children.

Our primary focus this year has been on implementing our strategic plan, maintaining our building and grounds, and keeping a close eye on expenses. Discussion around school funding formulas in Montpelier continues to create uncertainty at the district level with regard to property taxes, and that is why we are doing all we can to monitor and, where possible, reduce costs. Our new Building and Grounds supervisor, Bob Ratel, has been a huge asset in this regard and we are grateful for his work and expertise.

Communication and collaboration between the Thetford School District Board and Thetford Academy continue to be a priority as we navigate these budget cycles together. We will continue to maintain the many partnerships that exist between our two schools and ensure our lines of communication remain open so that it is easy for our students to make the transition from Thetford Elementary to the Academy. Thetford Academy continues to be an outstanding partner in our students' educational journey.

Academically, our teachers and administrators are researching and studying various math and literacy

programs that will best prepare our students for success in middle and high school. We will also be implementing Vermont Act 139 this year, which aims to increase literacy achievement for all students by focusing on early identification of students struggling with reading, student supports, strengthening educator preparation programs, and ensuring parents and guardians are informed of their child's progress.

As I begin my second term as a board member (and my first as board chair), I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the support your school board - and by extension, the Thetford Elementary School - receives from the Thetford community. We are proud of our school and we are committed to providing the children of Thetford with an education that will prepare them for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Thank you for your support, patience, and partnership.



Sincerely

Nicholas Cook

BOARD CHAIR



SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Mary Chin

Term: 2023-2025

**Nicholas Cook
Board Chair**

Term 2024-2027

Stephanie Hareld

Term 2024-2026

Jeffrey Jamele

Term: 2023-2026

Alexis Sargent

Term 2024-2025

Thetford ELEMENTARY

LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

To the Thetford Elementary School Community,

It is both my pleasure and privilege to be writing my first Annual Report letter as principal of this amazing learning community. We are having a wonderful year, and there are so many positive things to share with you.

We were pleased to roll out and begin implementing our strategic plan this year, and I am grateful for the work that so many people put into it. In this first year of implementation we will be focusing on four separate areas, including place based education, collecting data to make informed decisions, literacy (with an eye towards Act 139), and specific diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. All four of these goals have been a big focus this year, and I am happy to report we are well on target for meeting specific year one goals that fall under each area.

For goal number one, place based education, our faculty and staff visited the Zebedee Wetlands on a professional development day in order to acclimate themselves to what the beautiful area has to offer. Zebedee serves as a living outdoor classroom and is a critical resource for



natural science educators. In recent years, the second-grade curriculum here at TES has included wetland and forest studies conducted on the property. Learning outside of the classroom helps students make connections to what they are studying in the classroom, as well as develop social skills, emotional well-being, and physical development.

Our second goal, collecting data, has involved professional development around learning how to use “EduCLIMBER” (a new OESU initiative). EduCLIMBER is an interactive, district-level to whole-child data management system that houses every piece of student data related to academics,



Thetford Elementary partnered with Latham Library to receive a Rural Libraries Grant from the Children’s Literacy Foundation (CLiF) for the 2024-2025 school year! In October, Duncan McDougall of CLiF gave an engaging storytelling presentation at TES.

Strategic Plan Focus Areas for 2024-25

1 Place-based education

2 Data for informed decision-making

3 Literacy

4 Diversity, equity and inclusion



behavior, and social growth. It is an ideal tool for strengthening Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) implementations, and it will help us better understand not only where

each student is in their learning journey, but also to monitor their progress and make decisions around interventions that will get them to where they should be more quickly. This has been a big highlight this year, and will be extremely helpful in guiding and informing our decisions as the year progresses.

Another initiative this year is our approach to working together as a team. When we meet for staff meetings now, instead of me or someone else delivering information, we are now gathering in circles to discuss whatever is on anyone's mind. The goal is to talk with one another about what's going on, not only in our classrooms, but also around the school, in the hallways, in the lunchroom, and on the playground. It's no secret that over the past few years there have been more than a few changes at the leadership level, and one result of that has been grade level teams working almost in silos. This year, we're not looking so much at which students belong to which teachers, but rather agreeing that every student belongs to every teacher. We are one learning community, one team, and we're learning how to make decisions together for the benefit of all.

Also new this year is the position of Dean of Students, very ably filled by Tori Benson. Tori is an amazing asset to our team and has truly hit the ground running, working with families and students from day one. She's become a

valued "go-to" resource for our staff, paras, and families and she's really become my right hand person. This position evolved from Social-Emotional Learning Coordinator to Dean of Students this year and in this role, Tori collaborates with students, teachers, families, and community organizations to develop strategies and to support students in reaching their goals. These strategies can include one-on-one and group counseling, check-ins and check-outs, behavior management and restorative circles to name a few. It's been wonderful having her join our team.

We welcomed Bob Ratel as our Building and Grounds supervisor this year. Bob is now overseeing the work and projects we historically managed through an agreement with Thetford Academy. Beginning this year however, we brought the position in house in order to better manage capital projects, building maintenance, and improvements. The new arrangement is not only fiscally responsible but is also helping us better





At left, Thetford Elementary School students laced up their comfortable shoes and walked in the woods during the Hike for Hunger fundraiser, held on a sunny day in in October.

maintain our building and grounds.

We are grateful for the work being done this year by Sara Bailey. Sara has been at TES for 16 years and is currently juggling two roles within the school, that of a school counselor and school psychologist. We were unable to fill the school psychologist position at the end of last year, and Sara stepped up this year to oversee both roles.

At the end of the school year we'll be saying goodbye to longtime teacher and reading interventionist Regina Bradley. Regina has been working with and caring for TES students for almost 30 years and while we wish her all the best in her well deserved retirement, losing her will be a big loss for all of us.

Finally, we will be working as a team this spring to figure out best practices around a K-6 instructional curriculum that can be utilized in all grades. We currently use different math programs for grades K-2, 3-4, and 5-6, and bringing our instruction (in terms of

language and method) into alignment will be a big help towards preparing students for success at Thetford Academy. Along those same lines, we will also be making decisions on literacy instruction to align with Act 139, the goal being to have a robust literacy program in place that allows us to test, assess, gather data, and plan instruction and interventions where needed. It is all important work, and I'm pleased that we're working as a team to get these initiatives in place.

In closing, I'd like to give a huge thank you to our parents and community members who support our efforts in so many ways. We couldn't do what we're doing without you.



Sincerely,

Caitlin Toleno

PRINCIPAL, *Thetford Elementary School*

Thetford ACADEMY

LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



Dear Thetford Community,

As we look back at 2024 and decide on which highlights to share with you, I am struck with awe and pride at the abundance of school programs, student achievements, and all-around 'good news' stories there are to feature. There is seldom an idle moment on Thetford Hill, and no way to bundle it all into one town report!

My hope is that each of you were able to experience Thetford Academy's 205th year, in one way or another ... coming to campus for events, following school news from afar, talking with a student in the community, connecting with us through social media, enjoying our extensive trails and fields for recreation, supporting our fundraising efforts, cheering on our teams, attending a reunion, serving as a volunteer – or some combination of these!

Our school is a community school. I thank those who were able to play a part in 2024 and welcome everyone to join us in 2025.

As we look ahead to Town Meeting Day and budget votes for the coming year, I want to assure you that the Thetford Academy trustees and I strive to strike the right balance between cost and quality as we lead the school into the future. We are working diligently to manage school funding pressures, while ensuring that TA continues to be academically competitive,

fiscally strong and sustainable, and a valued community asset.

Thetford Academy is a thriving school that our town can be proud of, and it is a sought-after destination for families from neighboring communities. We exceeded our enrollment target for 2024-25, with over 320 students on campus. Thetford residents comprise 45% of the high school student body this year. This means that over half of the students in grades 9-12 are selecting TA from among the high school options their town offers.

We know the value differential of the TA experience and are pleased that others recognize it too.

I look forward to connecting with many of you at Town Meeting and over the course of 2025. On behalf of all of us at TA, I share my gratitude for your support. Thetford Academy endures and succeeds over the generations because of the deep and sustaining relationship with the community of Thetford.



Sincerely,

Carrie Brennan

HEAD OF SCHOOL, *Thetford Academy*



8th grade students descend Black Mountain, TA Mountain Day 2024.

THETFORD ACADEMY 2024: **The Year in Review**



Winter Highlights

- TA celebrates 81st annual Founders' Day, with traditions including friendly class competitions and an all-school banquet.
- The State of Vermont awards a \$15,000 grant to support TA's Farm to School program.
- Boys basketball team has come-from-behind victories in final games of the season and earns third state championship in six years.
- Robotics team sweeps awards at the VT/NH championship, earning three spots at Worlds.
- 18 high school students pursue TA's independent study option, presenting on their projects and process at the "challenge course expo" in January and June.



Spring Highlights

- Panther boys track wins Division III championship in a landslide.
- Eighth grade students journey to Montreal for a multi-day field trip (the first since 2019!).
- Drama students wow crowds at four sold-out performances of Mamma Mia!
- Seniors present academic portfolios to family and faculty, sharing culminating evidence and reflections on their learning and growth.
- 25-year veteran teacher Jennifer Gernhard receives the annual Peters' Family Dedicated Employee Award.
- TA celebrates 56 graduating seniors at the class of 2024's commencement ceremony.



Summer Highlights

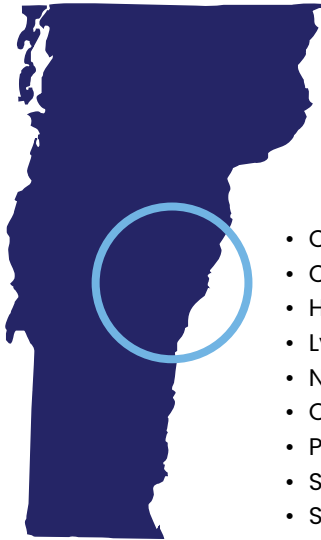
- Flynn Theater brings Cirque Kikasse to campus for an evening performance that wows the 300+ community audience.
- The Classes of 1974, 1999, and 2004 celebrate milestone reunions.
- New 9-hole disc golf course, built with and for students and community members, opens on TA's South Campus.
- Joel Breakstone and Emily Silver named 2024 Vermont Track & Field Coaches of the Year.
- In memory of coach Scott Chapman, the Cowboy Classic Meet draws over 100 alumni, students, and family members to compete in field events.



Fall Highlights

- TA announces plan to go "phone free from 8 to 3," to support dual priorities of academic focus and student belonging.
- TA launches 206th school year with over 320 students enrolled.
- Completion of the wheelchair lift renovation in the 1966 annex wing brings a new level of accessibility across campus.
- Students ascend six peaks on September 20 as part of Thetford Academy's Mountain Day tradition (46 years and counting!).
- TA hosts robotics meet, bringing over 30 VT and NH teams together for a day of competition in the Vaughan Alumni Gymnasium.

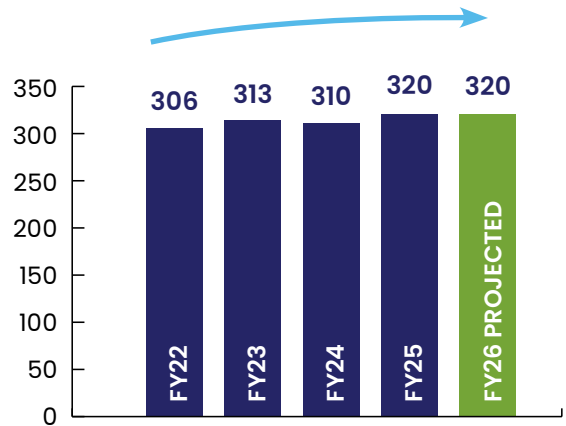
THETFORD ACADEMY 2024: Facts & Figures



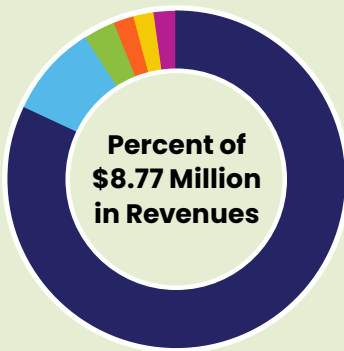
Where Do TA Students Come From?

- Chelsea
- Corinth
- Hartland
- Lyme, NH
- Norwich
- Orange
- Piermont, NH
- Sharon
- Stockbridge
- Strafford
- Thetford
- Topsham
- Tunbridge
- Washington
- Weathersfield
- International: China, Germany

Enrollment Actual & Projected

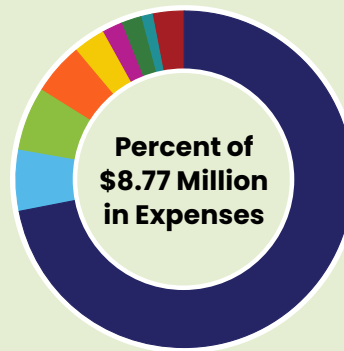


Projected Revenues FY2026



- Tuition » **82%**
- Special Education Reimbursement » **9%**
- Grants and Donations » **3%**
- Endowment » **2%**
- Food Service Reimbursement » **2%**
- Other » **2%**

Projected Expenses FY2026



- Personnel » **72%**
- Facilities » **6%**
- Debt Service » **6%**
- Classroom Supplies » **5%**
- Transportation » **3%**
- Food Service » **2%**
- Administration » **1%**
- Information Tech. » **1%**
- Other » **3%**

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

TA Class of 2024 Matriculation

- Bishop's University
- Brandeis University
- Champlain College
- Clark University
- Community College of Vermont
- Connecticut College
- Dartmouth College
- Dickinson College
- Emerson College
- Ithaca College
- Keene State College
- Lewis & Clark College
- Massachusetts College of Art & Design
- Mercyhurst University
- Middlebury College
- Northwestern University
- Princeton University
- Rochester Institute of Technology
- St. Lawrence University
- School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- SUNY New Paltz
- The George Washington University
- University of Arizona
- University of New England
- University of New Hampshire
- University of Utah
- University of Vermont
- Vassar College
- Vermont State University
- Western Colorado University

TA Tuition Rates

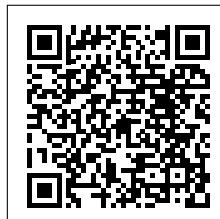


FY24	\$22,430
FY25	\$23,890
FY26	\$25,060

THETFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT: Year-to-Year Budget Comparison

	BUDGET FY23	BUDGET FY24	BUDGET FY25	DRAFT FY26	FY25 TO FY26 DOLLAR	FY25 TO FY26 PERCENT
REVENUES						
State - Support	\$8,681,375	\$9,210,116	\$9,637,127	\$9,800,193	\$163,066	1.7%
State - Special Education	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
State - Transportation	\$68,000	\$68,000	\$95,000	\$95,000	\$0	0.0%
Solar Farm	\$38,500	\$30,500	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$0	0.0%
General Fund Surplus	\$0	\$0	\$350,000	\$500,000	\$150,000	42.9%
Other Local/Miscellaneous	\$5,000	\$29,134	\$0		\$0	0.0%
Total Revenues	\$8,792,875	\$9,337,750	\$10,112,127	\$10,425,193	\$313,066	3.1%
BUDGET / EXPENSES						
EEE / Pre-K	\$158,330	\$175,232	\$185,000	\$212,000	\$27,000	14.6%
Elementary Instruction	\$2,112,616	\$2,268,673	\$2,580,385	\$2,549,851	-\$30,534	-1.2%
Secondary Tuition	\$3,853,500	\$3,965,512	\$4,146,000	\$4,161,000	\$15,000	0.4%
Vocational Education	\$122,600	\$129,007	\$131,000	\$240,000	\$109,000	83.2%
Special Education	\$754,696	\$858,370	\$908,937	\$1,116,528	\$207,591	22.8%
Guidance/Health/OT	\$299,902	\$325,678	\$329,758	\$291,935	-\$37,823	-11.5%
Library/Tech/Development	\$198,822	\$200,687	\$296,924	\$324,847	\$27,923	9.4%
Administrative	\$591,545	\$552,394	\$637,118	\$733,733	\$96,615	15.2%
Facilities	\$446,720	\$494,882	\$495,200	\$522,349	\$27,149	5.5%
Transportation	\$169,990	\$181,509	\$216,000	\$229,500	\$13,500	6.3%
Debt Service	\$34,153	\$30,805	\$30,805	\$43,450	\$12,645	41.0%
Transfers Out	\$50,000	\$155,000	\$155,000	\$0	-\$155,000	-100.0%
Total Expenses	\$8,792,875	\$9,337,750	\$10,112,127	\$10,425,193	\$313,066	3.1%

Scan the QR code to see
more detailed information
about the FY2026 Budget.



THETFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT:

Tax Rate Estimate

	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26
ESTIMATED EDUCATION SPENDING				
School District Budget	\$8,792,875	\$9,337,748	\$10,112,127	\$10,425,193
LESS ANTICIPATED RECEIPTS				
State and Local Revenue	\$111,500	\$127,634	\$125,000	\$125,000
Use of General Fund Surplus	\$0	\$50,000	\$350,000	\$500,000
Estimated Education Spending	\$8,681,375	\$9,160,114	\$9,637,127	\$9,800,193
TAX RATE ESTIMATES				
Equalized Pupils	427.5	402.26	531.75	566.72
Estimated Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$20,307	\$22,772	\$18,123	\$17,293
Eligible Construction Debt	\$0	\$1,100	\$0	\$0
Net Spending Per Equalized Pupil	\$20,307	\$21,672	\$18,123	\$17,293
Net Education Spending per Eq. Pupil for Excess Spending	\$20,307	\$21,672	\$18,123	\$17,293
Excess Spending Threshold	\$18,818	\$22,204	\$22,204	\$15,926
Estimated Excess Spending Penalty Above Threshold	\$331	\$0	\$0	\$1,367
TOTAL ESTIMATED EDUCATION SPENDING PER EQUALIZED PUPIL	\$20,638	\$22,772	\$18,123	\$18,660
Property Yield	\$13,314	\$15,479	\$9,893	\$8,553
Adjustment for Spending Above State BASE	2.48%	\$0	\$0	
State Base Homestead Tax Rate	1.5253	1.4711	1.8319	2.1817
Tax Rate Discount			-0.16	-0.18
Estimated Total Homestead Tax Rate, Equalized	1.5253	1.4711	1.6719	2.0017
CLA - Estimate Common Level of Appraisal	85.89	81.70	72.87	87.89
Estimated LOCAL Homestead Tax Rate	1.7759	1.8006	2.2944	2.2775
Base Non-Residential Equalized Tax Rate	1.466	1.386	1.391	1.79
Estimated LOCAL Non-Residential Tax Rate	1.7068	1.6965	1.9089	2.0378

THETFORD TOWN MEETING INFORMATION



Informational Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 18 • 5 pm
Thetford Elementary School



Town Meeting Day

Saturday, March 1 • 9 am
Thetford Elementary School



Voting Day

Tuesday, March 4 • 8 am – 7 pm
Thetford Town Hall



CONGRATS TO THE CLASS OF 2024!

- Nattaly Jordann Adams
- Owen Almond Bicknell
- Saylor Tacy Billiau
- Kelsey Farr Bogie
- Mary Giacomina Bosco
- Charlize Marie Brown
- Addison Thurston Cadwell
- Acadia Lauren Cook
- Harlequin Silas Copeland
- Chenoweth Elizabeth Donohue
- Audrey Grace Dowell
- Leo North Downey
- Natalie Elaine Drescher
- Eli Sapphire Ireland Dybvig
- Mason Jean Fahey
- Nathan Jordan Harris
- Ailia Hedgepeth
- Anne Catherine Hesser
- Alice Joan Hirschman
- Espen Keeran Hutchins
- Jasper Lee Jones
- Daniel Crews Kasten
- Asa Louis Kelleher
- Elizabeth Rose Knaus
- Samantha Grace LaPlume
- Chase Matthew LeFevre
- Whitney Marion Lewis
- Finn Erik Abbott Liland
- Cecilia Johanna Essex Luce
- Alford Charles Manning III
- Kayla Lynn Martin
- Benjamin Bailey Mattern
- Ella Shannon Maxwell
- Benjamin John McIlvaine
- Iris Elizabeth Morand
- Layne Thomas Mullen
- Shannon Nora O'Donnell
- John Francis Paquette
- Mitchell Elias Parkman
- Benjamin Thomas Perron
- Aden Rigel Patrick Perry
- Anikin Plamondon Peters
- Peter Maxson Quayle
- Samuel Adams Richardson
- Wyatt John Riemer
- Larry Justin Robinson
- Henry David Sayers
- Margaret Elizabeth Smallwood
- Grace Willow Solsaa
- Zurael Jocelyn Star
- Madeleine Natalie Cates Thaxton
- Mary Alice Veracka
- Xander Cordell Waln
- Ashton Perry Waters
- Justin Preston Wylie
- Oliver Rudolph Yukica



Scan the QR code to
view the warning for
Town Meeting 2025.