

Salem Elementary School Closure 2025-2026

Frequently Asked Questions *DRAFT*

March 7, 2025

1. Why is the Naugatuck Board of Education closing Salem School?

Each year, the Naugatuck Board of Education develops its budget over several months. The Board is currently preparing its 2025-2026 budget request for the Borough of Naugatuck, a process typically completed by the end of March.

Flat state funding, decreased federal funding, and rising costs have contributed to an increased Board of Education budget for fiscal year 2025-2026. In addition to the expected annual increases associated with contractual salary adjustments, healthcare costs, and rising energy and utility expenses, the district has faced significant increases in out-of-district special education/magnet tuition and transportation costs. These expenses account for approximately \$2.8 million of the total \$6,619,576 budget increase.

The Board of Education made the difficult decision to close Salem Elementary School as a cost-saving measure to save approximately \$850,000. It is also a measure to preserve class size. 2025.2026 [Elementary class sizes](#), (which are answered separately in another question), are maintained better through the closure than reducing teaching positions at each school.

2. Were there other factors that led to the closing of Salem School?

While the decision to close Salem School for the 2025-2026 school year was primarily financial, declining enrollment has been an ongoing trend and is projected to continue in the coming years. Additionally, Salem, our oldest school built in 1893, is not ADA accessible and falls short in cafeteria, gymnasium, and outdoor space compared to our other elementary schools.

3. When will we find out what school our students are going to?

The Directory of Streets, [which I am linking here](#), has been updated with school assignments by street and posted on our website under the Board of Education section. This document remains a draft at this time. While we do not expect any changes, as we move through the Spring, any changes, if at all, will be communicated directly with those families impacted.

4. How will class sizes be affected throughout elementary schools?

We have included a projected class size chart in our presentation and linked it on our website. It is also [linked here](#). If staffing levels remain consistent with our current plan, class size is

projected to range from 17 to 23. However, without closing Salem Elementary School class sizes across the district would be larger.

5. Will all teachers/school staff be guaranteed positions within the district?

The budget is a dynamic, months-long process. Given declining enrollment and rising costs, the district anticipates reducing positions across multiple departments. Additionally, Salem teachers will be reassigned to other elementary schools in alignment with student reassignments and in accordance with the teachers' contract.

6. Will the schools have enough accommodations to support all the children who have IEPs and 504s that use speech services and extra help in different areas of school?

Yes, our schools will continue to provide all special education and related services next year. Staff from Salem School will be reassigned to the other elementary schools based on the reassignment of students. This is true for classroom teachers and special services staff based on the needs of our students. The Naugatuck Public Schools remain committed to implementing all Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans in accordance with federal and state regulations.

7. What is the plan for interventionists for the rest of this year and going into the new school year? Will our students' needs continue to be met under this budget and with increased class sizes due to the closure of Salem Elementary?

Based on our current plan for the 2025-2026 school year, the closure of Salem School will not lead to high class sizes, provided that staffing levels and budget funding remain consistent. While interventionist positions have been reduced, they are still included in the current plan for the 2025-2026 school year.

8. What opportunities are available for advanced learners? Are there small groups or opportunities for one-on-one for those students?

Our classrooms are filled with diverse learners. We will continue to differentiate and meet the needs of our individual learners.

9. Why is the board of education at a significant shortfall for the 2024-2025 year if you were working out of an approved budget? Why was this decision made without an official vote from the board? How is closing Salem going to make up for the budget shortfall?

In 2024-2025 we experienced significant unanticipated expenses in out of district tuition and mandated out of district transportation. The decision to close Salem School was based on the

development of the 2025-2026 budget. Through the 2025-2026 budget development process, the Board of Education made the difficult decision to close Salem School as a group. The Board will vote on a budget to present to the town at the March 13th Naugatuck Board Meeting. It was a difficult decision that was not made lightly. However, increased costs district-wide made the closing necessary.

10. How can we be sure there won't be massive budget cuts next year?

While we cannot predict the future with absolute certainty, we base our budget planning on current funding trends, anticipated revenue, and ongoing discussions with state and local officials. Additionally, we work to maintain fiscal responsibility by aligning staffing and resources with projected student needs. Any potential budget adjustments would be addressed through careful planning and advocacy to minimize the impact on class sizes and student services.

11. How can you possibly fit our kids in the other schools without affecting class sizes or taking other classrooms (art, music, library, etc.) away?

Many of our elementary schools will return to enrollment consistent with enrollment from years ago. Western, Hop Brook, and Maple were built to house more students. In some cases, we may repurpose classrooms currently used for music and art to general education classrooms, however, art and music classes will remain.

12. What is the guarantee that class sizes won't balloon in 2026?

School enrollment fluctuates based on people buying and selling homes. While we can never guarantee future class size, we work with community planners who provide professional enrollment projections. Our enrollment projections predict declining enrollment through 2031. We will get updated enrollment projections through 2036 next year.

13. Will any other schools be closing?

At this time, other schools are not being considered for closure.

14. What are the financial benefits of this closure? Will there be funds available for other resources? If so, how will they be allocated and spent?

We estimate that closing Salem School will save approximately \$850,000. Because this is a reduction to the Board of Education's 2025-2026 Budget request to the town, there is no additional money to spend and or allocate from the \$850,000 savings. The money saved (approximately \$850,000) will help preserve and fund the Naugatuck Public Schools Budget.

15. Are there any potential sources of funding or grants that could prevent the closure?

There are no additional funding sources such as grants that could prevent the closure. We expect to receive less federal grant funding and flat state funding in the 2025-2026 school year.

16. Will additional social work/counseling staff be contracted to support the student's emotional needs throughout this change? If not, will the current social work/counseling staff be appropriately compensated for the additional work they will take on during this period of transition?

Our social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists are ready to support our students with the transition. They care deeply about our students and will work to support all students. Compensation for our certified employees is based on their respective collective bargaining agreements.

17. Once redistricting is completed, would it be possible for students to spend some extra time with the kids they will be attending their new school with to strengthen these friendships? Perhaps during an extra recess or splitting them up by (new) school for team-building exercises?

Our elementary schools will plan activities and events to support the transition which will include all students visiting their new schools during the day this school year and opportunities for parents to visit in the evening. We will be communicating our plans more as they are developed throughout the Spring. We appreciate the ideas and perspectives of how families can best support our students through the transition and welcome ongoing feedback and ideas throughout the process.

18. Have all potential cost-saving measures been fully explored before this decision was made?

Yes. The Naugatuck Board of Education reduced the 2025-2026 budget request by approximately \$1,200,000 prior to making the decision to close Salem Elementary School for the 2025-2026 school year.

19. What does the town plan to do with the Salem school building?

Naugatuck has a long-range plan for all of its schools. As part of the long-range plan, Salem School would eventually become the Town Hall. Based on the long-range plan, this would occur no earlier than 5 years from now. Given the closure of Salem School for the 2025-2026 school year, the Long Range Facilities Committee will review and update their timelines, including the town's use of Salem School, in the months ahead.

20. Why was the community informed about this via email after the decision was already made? Families, children and school staff were all left to process this over the weekend with no warning and no clear guidance about the future.

Salem is a beloved school with amazing students, engaged families, and an exceptional staff. The decision to close Salem School was made for financial reasons. It was a very difficult decision. The superintendent communicated the decision as soon as we realized that it was necessary to close Salem School. Communication occurred with the Salem Community the day after the Board made the difficult decision to close the school. Our intention was to ensure that the Salem community was informed the day after the Board's decision to ensure they heard the news directly from NPS staff rather than through social media and that faculty and staff were informed in person. We communicated on a Friday afternoon with families to allow families time to process the news with their children. We realize and understand that families and staff want to know their reassignments for next year and have been working to provide that information as soon as possible.

21. Will upper administration/high-ranking employees within the Naugatuck school district also see changes in their salaries to compensate for budgeting shortfalls?

Salaries for faculty and staff are collectively bargained or negotiated as part of a contract.

22. Are the kids going to be able to finish this school year?

Yes, the students at Salem School will finish the 2024-2025 school year at Salem Elementary School. The school will close for the 2025-2026 school year.

23. If my son gets assigned to one of the elementary schools in town that moves onto Cross Street for 5th grade, would he then attend Cross Street instead of Hillside? And would this affect students like my daughter who currently attends Hillside as a 5th grader?

Students who currently attend Hillside or Cross Street as 5th Graders will continue to attend their current school despite the changes associated with Salem and the updated attendance zones.

4th Grade students who currently (2024-2025) attend Salem Elementary School will go Hillside for 5th and 6th grade.

Students who are currently enrolled at Salem School in grades K-3 will attend either Hillside or Cross Street based on their elementary attendance zone: Hop Brook and Maple Hill students go to Cross Street Intermediate School for 5th and 6th grade and Andrew Avenue and Western School students go to Hillside Intermediate School for 5th and 6th grade. See [Directory of Streets with School Attendance Zones](#).

24. How will I know what bus my child will be on?

The 2025-2026 bus routes for eligible Naugatuck students will be posted on the [Naugatuck Public School website](#) in August.

25. Do we have any choice as to which school our children go to? Can I request a school for my child if I bring them to and from school?

Each school has a designated attendance area as determined by the Board of Education and students who live within that attendance area attend that school. Sometimes parents or guardians request that their child be allowed to attend another school in town. We consider these requests when there is space available and it is deemed in the best interests of the child. One of the conditions for accepting transfer requests is that transportation will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. See [Board of Education Policy 5117, Intra-District Attendance](#), for further information.