

RSD17 Budget FAQs 2025-26

When is the RSD17 budget referendum and what are we voting on?

On June 6, 2025, a second referendum for the RSD17 Board of Education 2025-26 School Gross Budget of **\$51,798,789** will be brought to the towns of Haddam and Killingworth for a referendum. This budget represents an increase of \$1,980,760 or 3.98%. After revenue, grants, and fund balances, the towns of Haddam and Killingworth will be assessed approximately \$29,331,546 (59.16%) and \$20,248,485 (40.84%), respectively. This is based on October 1, 2024, student enrollment, which was 1719 students.

Voting will take place at regular local polling locations.

You can read the [proposed budget here](#)

What are some of the major increases in this budget?

- **Salaries & Benefits**

Total FY26 salaries equal \$25,661,981, an increase of \$1,525,578 over the FY25 budget. Over the past two years, there has been a reduction of 8 certified FTEs and 15 non-certified FTEs. This year's budget proposes an increase in 1.4 certified and .5 non-certified staff. Finally, health insurance premiums for FY26 are estimated to contribute an increase of \$287,294 to this year's budget.

- **Transportation**

This year is the final year of a 3-year student transportation contract, with a 5% rate increase for FY26. This rate increase, combined with the McKinney-Vento federal service requirements and increased PreK-SPED and SPED transportation, is combined for a total student transportation cost of \$4,742,033 or an increase of \$440,004 or 10.23% over FY25.

- **Special Education Tuition**

The proposed Special Education increase of \$298,029 is due to the changing needs of our student population. Tuition costs for both public and non-public tuitions (outplaced resident students for whom RSD17 is financially responsible) is budgeted at \$3,283,371 or an increase of \$298,029 or 9.98%.

- **Debt Service, Long-Term Investments, and Reserve Fund for Educational Expenditures**

This year, the District will invest \$1.2 million in the elementary schools and \$200,000 in HKIMS from its Capital Fund for Educational Expenditures. These investments will support the completion of elementary school security camera and viewboard upgrades, launch a four-year replacement plan for outdated furniture and fixtures, replacement of a boiler at Burr Elementary School, and of the driveway and lots at Killingworth Elementary. Finally, the budget includes \$893,500 in debt service payments for the 2018 HKHS building improvements.

What budget adjustments were made from the Superintendent's original proposed budget until now?

For the FIRST referendum on May 6th, the Board reduced the Superintendent's proposed gross budget from a 5.49% increase to a 4.8% increase, through the following:

- Moved Debt Service back to the General Fund in the amount of \$893,500
- Increased **Reserve Fund contribution** by \$600,000, for a total budget line of \$800,000 (1.53% of FY26 budget)
- Reduced Audit Services Budget by \$35,000
- Reduced Salary Contingency Budget by \$50,000
- Reduced Emergency Repairs & Maintenance Budget by \$295,000
- Reduced Health Insurance Budget by \$500,000
- Reduced Instructional and Other Supplies Budgets by \$25,000

For the SECOND referendum on June 6th, the Board reduced the gross budget from a 4.8% increase to a 3.98% increase through the following:

- Decreased **Reserve Fund contribution** by \$277,500 for a total budget line of \$522,500 (1.01% of the FY26 budget)
- Decreased Auditing Services by \$15,000
- Decreased Liability/Auto/Property Insurance by \$50,000
- Decreased Health Insurance by \$82,500
- Decreased Retiree Pay-Out by \$8,000
- Decreased Equipment by \$2,000

Why is there a 6.32% increase in salaries?

The 6.32% increase in salaries is primarily due to both strategic investments in student support and necessary adjustments to ensure the budget more accurately reflects actual staffing needs. Here's a breakdown of the key reasons:

Support Salaries Increase

- The budget now more closely reflects the actual number of needed paraeducator positions, which are essential for inclusive education and individualized student support. Last year this line item was under budgeted and this year it is appropriately budgeted for student needs.
- Registered Behavior Technician positions have been added to their own specific budget lines, increasing transparency and reflecting the district's focus on behavior and mental health services.

New and Previously Unbudgeted Positions

- Staff that was added last year but we are seeing for the first time in this budget: High school security, and finance office support.
- The staff we are adding this year: 1.4 certified staff and .5 non-certified staff
- Increased hours for academic support at the middle school level to support the change in scheduling with an emphasis on math improvement.
- Movement of positions previously funded by grants into the school budget to ensure continuity of services.
- Introduction of stipends for safety coverage at high school events.

Contractual Increases

- Most staff received 2.5%–4% salary increases, depending on contractual agreements.
- However, additional increases have occurred due to longevity and educational advancement per the collective bargaining agreement.
- In addition, new collective bargaining agreements will begin this year that ensure fair and competitive compensation. While RSD17 is not among the highest-paying districts, we are working to remain competitive by aligning our compensation with the average pay levels in comparable districts

The 6.32% salary line increase reflects a deliberate and strategic effort to enhance student academic and behavioral support, ensure staffing costs are accurately and transparently accounted for, and uphold fair, contractually obligated compensation for staff.

What is our cost per student in our district?

The student to dollar ratio, or Net Expenditure per Pupil, is a metric tracked by the State each year to assess the spending efficiency of school districts. In the most recent State of CT report, the Region 17 (RSD17) NEP is \$25,947; a lower per pupil expenditure compared to our similarly sized neighboring districts. It highlights the ongoing challenge of balancing budget constraints with the goal of providing a high-quality education for all students in RSD17. For reference, the NEP for Region 13 is \$28,300, Old Saybrook: \$27,652, Region 4: \$29,496 and Clinton: \$24,911.

Does the school budget directly take money away from other town services?

For a comprehensive understanding of how town services are funded and whether the school budget impacts other services, it is advisable to consult with the Board of Finance in your town. They are best positioned to provide insights into the interplay between the school budget and the broader allocation of resources for municipal services.

How much does it cost to conduct a school budget referendum?

Each referendum costs towns approximately \$3,000-\$5,000, but the question of specific amounts should be directed to the Haddam and Killingworth Boards of Finance.

Is this a Referendum for the Master Plan/HKHS Plan?

No, this is a vote for the annual school budget, not a vote for the high school project. At this point, a date has not been chosen for the high school project referendum

What is the ELA and Math Proficiency in the district compared to the rest of the state?

The latest recorded data is from the 2023-24 school year, and RSD17's District Performance Index (DPI) for ELA was 72.4%, compared to the statewide average of 63.9%. The RSD17 Math DPI was 70.4%, compared to the statewide average of 60.2%.

Why is Killingworth's share increasing this year?

Haddam and Killingworth contribute to the school budget based on their respective student enrollments as of October 1st of the preceding year, known as the "Average Daily Membership (ADM)." This academic year, enrollment shifted and Haddam has 52 fewer students, while Killingworth experienced a decrease of 1. Consequently, Haddam's net assessment has decreased to 59.16% with a total of 1,017 enrolled students, while Killingworth's share is now 40.84% with 702.

While Killingworth's share is increasing this year, it's important to understand that these numbers fluctuate yearly depending on the number of students graduating and entering Kindergarten in each town.

A more historical picture shows that in the 2007-2008 school year, the total enrollment was 2,493 students: Haddam had 1,359 students (54%), and Killingworth had 1,134 (46%). Over the past two decades, while there have been ups and downs, Killingworth's overall share of the responsibility has shifted down several percentage points. And even though this year is up, this is still not the highest Killingworth has seen in those decades. Killingworth peaked some time ago in 2011-2012 with 45.70% of the total enrollment, while Haddam reached its highest proportion of students recently in 2023-2024 at 61.46%.

Is enrollment still declining?

There have been two recent demographic studies done; one by the NEASC committee and one by Tecton, the architectural firm hired by the district for the Master Plan. Both studies show that we should hold steady around this amount of students for a few years and will then begin to see a small rise in numbers.

What is the benefit of having an Assistant Superintendent?

The Assistant Superintendent's leadership has directly improved instructional impact, thereby student learning as well as internal efficiency, such as digitizing manual processes to free staff for higher-impact work. In addition, the position's oversight of Human Resources, which is highly regulated, ensures that the district is in compliance with legislation designed to protect students and staff and reduce financial and legal risk to the district.

How much of the budget is spent on administration; is our district "Top Heavy"?

Over **92%** of the budget is invested directly in school-based student support, and the remaining **8%** includes critical services through positions RSD17 has strategically maintained to impact the district's goals of student growth, effectiveness, and efficiency. The following is a list of what these positions bring to the district:

- Special education coordination
- Staff recruitment, training, and evaluation
- Compliance and best practices in Human Resources, reducing legal and financial risk to the district
- Building and grounds maintenance
- Technology infrastructure and support, data management
- Curriculum development, program implementation

- Data systems to monitor and improve student outcomes, and comply with state and federal mandates
- Finance functions
- Transportation coordination

What are the current class sizes in HK?

Average Class size by school and grade:

Burr Elementary School

Kindergarten - 14.25

First - 16

Second - 19.5

Third - 20.25

Killingworth Elementary School

PreK - 10.6

Kindergarten - 14

First - 16.33

Second - 17.33

Third - 21.67

Haddam Killingworth Intermediate School

Fourth - 22

Fifth - 24.67

Haddam Killingworth Middle School

Sixth - 23

Seventh - 21.5

Eighth - 19.38

Haddam Killingworth High School

Total Class Size by Year:

Ninth - 97

Tenth - 120

Eleventh - 126

Twelfth - 125

Do you have a question for the FAQ? [Click here to submit your question](#)