

BOE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS GRID**2026-27 BUDGET****Workshops on January 13, & 15, 2026**

QUES #	BOE INTL	CTGRY	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
TRANSPORTATION				
1.	BB	Trans	Can we reduce the number of buses, using a parental waiver to opt in, since many of our buses are half or less full	Each year, we look for opportunities to reduce the number of buses required. One of our largest constraints is that Southington has more than 200 miles of roadway. In addition, Board of Education policy states that bus routes may begin no earlier than 45 minutes before the start of the school day. We also aim to have students arrive at school at least 10 minutes prior to the bell. Together, these parameters limit maximum bus travel time to approximately 35 minutes.
15.	ZO		Transportation with the number of students being dropped off or driving to school, can we look at the capacity of our buses vs the ridership and see if we can reduce the number of buses and possibly adjust routes.	High School (SHS) routes drive the majority of our bus needs. When buses travel from the southwest (Wolcott), northwest (Bristol), and southwest (Meriden) corners of town. These time constraints become a significant challenge. On paper, the current average bus travel time for SHS is 31 minutes.
16.	ZO		Transportation: with the reduction in gas prices, can we translate some of that into a reduction in the cost of transportation.	While we will continue to look for efficiencies within the routing system, a more effective use of resources may be to reduce walking distance for SHS and the MS. We already know that reducing walking distances at the elem level would require adding a bus. However, I would be glad to study the feasibility of adjusting walker distances for the middle and high schools. Doing so could provide more students with access to bus transportation and help reduce drop-off traffic at the schools. The service agreement between SPS and NBT stipulates both diesel and unleaded fuel will be supplied by the vendor. These costs are included in the rates agreed upon in Exhibit A of the contract.

STAFFING

2.	BB	Staffing, Salaries	Can we get a comparison of teacher salaries to others in our DRG, average salary, starting and top.	SLIDE: Salary Comparison with DRG C and Hartford County
3.	BB	Staffing	Can we see a comparison of our ratio of administrators to students compared to others in our DRG.	SLIDE: Admin to Student Ratio The state has not updated DRG reference groups in over a decade, even though the information used to determine a DRG assignment may have changed significantly during that period. Knowing this, the School State Finance Project updated DRG reference groups in 2023. The following graph contains the requested information, and the link below shows the latest DRG assignments. School State Finance Report
14.	ZO		Can we see a list of administrator positions in the district and by school along with a per pupil ratio. Can we see this information on other comparable districts in our DRG	Certified administrative positions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• District: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Pupil Services, Director of Teaching and Learning, ELA/SS Coordinator, Math/Science Coordinator, Digital Learning Coordinator, 4 Special Education Coordinators (2 elementary, 1 middle, 1 high)• Building level: 7 assistant principals (1 elementary, 2 middle, 4 high school) 1 academy director (KSA), 1 athletic director, 1 guidance director, 11 principals.
31.	JB	Staffing	Page 9: Where is the elementary teacher required, and how does it affect class size?	The district is projecting an increase in one section at Strong Elementary based on current enrollments. Adding this section will keep the district within the board's class-size guidelines.

PER PUPIL SPENDING

4.	BB	Per Pupil	<p>Can we see a comparison of per pupil spending comparisons with all in our DRG.</p>	<p>SLIDE: Per Pupil Expenditure</p> <p>Southington's per pupil expenditure (NCEP) is \$19,930; State Average is \$24,270.</p> <p>DRG C and Other Comparative data added to the Google Slide.</p>
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SOLAR / ELECTRICITY

5.	BB	Energy	<p>I am puzzled by what seems to be minimal savings due to solar—why?</p>	<p>SLIDE: Solar Savings</p> <p>Please see attached information provided by the Town's energy consultant, TitanGen.</p>
20.	ZO		<p>Electricity 32120: What if any savings/ cost avoidance are we getting from the solar arrays at our schools. Have they reduced the amount of increase in electricity we have seen?</p>	
33	JB	Energy	<p>Can we look at the electricity part of the increase request? There was no saving with changes to public benefits charges?</p>	<p>The public benefits charge increased unexpectedly in June 2024 to about \$.04/kWh on average. In September 2025 the rate settled back down to \$.02/kWh. That increase had an impact on FY25 expenditures when the district was over budget in electricity by approximately \$63,000.</p> <p>The FY 27 proposed increase reflects a new contract price for the supply of electricity at a slightly higher \$/kWh rate which will begin in November 2027. The kWh are variable and continue to increase with more devices in the schools.</p>

MAINTENANCE/OPERATIONS

7.	LC	Operations	Do we combine efforts with the town during bidding processes for items such as refuse, plowing, mowing, and other expenses that have potential to be shared?	Services like plowing and mowing need to meet very specific timing requirements. The BOE pays particular attention to the vendors awarded for these contracts to ensure vendors can meet the timing requirements needed for each site they are awarded. During the most recent refuse bid, the TOS decided to bid their sites separately from the BOE.
9.	DDA		Is it possible to have the town employees take care of plowing, grounds maintenance, and mowing instead of hiring an outside contractor? (Ref# 32900 & 32910)	The resources the Town would need to perform these services is not feasible. In order for our schools to operate on schedule, vendors must adhere to strict timetables to complete their work. Using outside contractors, where the district can award based on the vendor's ability to deliver on their services ensures the work is completed with the least disruption the school day.

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR SALARIES

8.	LC	SPED ESY	Can we get more detail regarding the Extended School Year (ESY) salaries (Ref # 83125)? What is the staffing breakdown?	SLIDE: ESY Salaries ESY is run for four weeks in July, 4 days @ 4 hours/day (64 hours) plus a 4 hour set up day for a total of 68 summer hours. The ESY enrollment has continued to increase from 205 students in 2023-24 to 242 students in 24-25. The projected staffing is on the slide.
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HEALTH INSURANCE

10.	DDA	Health Ins	Does the current town employee contracts allow for the option to explore a change in health insurance provider ?(Ref#20310)	<p>All SPS and TOS contracts have the same language, which reads: <i>Other carriers may be substituted provided the benefits are equivalent as provided through the current Board self-insurance plan.</i></p> <p>Included is a document that was submitted to Paul Chaplinski in 2022 when the <u>Self-Insurance Committee voted unanimously to recommend the switch of insurance carriers from Anthem to Cigna.</u></p>
11.	DDA	Health Ins	Why did the town remove the Self Insurance Committee?	The action to dissolve the Self-Insurance Committee was taken by the Town Council.
40	CC	Health Ins	Can we take a percentage off of the estimated insurance increase due to updated information?	The budget as presented includes the \$500,000 use of reserves as well as the reduction in the projection provided by our consultant, Joe Spurgeon, to the BOF on 12/30/2025. The reduction is listed as part of our efforts to move from 9.51% to 6.89% (Item #2 in the Superintendent's letter).

SPECIAL EDUCATION

17.	ZO	Spec Ed	<p>SPED:</p> <p>Can we see the numbers of students that have been brought back into the district over the last 3 years and the average savings/cost avoidance that have translated to.</p>	SLIDE: OOD Students Return to SPS
18.	ZO	Staffing, Increase	<p>Can you explain the impact to the students and district of adding the Social Worker, Special Ed Teacher and TESOL Teacher.</p>	SLIDE: Staffing Requests
30.	CC		<p>How many Social Workers do we have in the district and how are they distributed?</p>	The district currently has 14 social workers
32.	SC		<p>What are the deliverables to the district for a social worker?</p>	Included in the slide
19.	ZO	SPED Staffing, Ratios	<p>SPED: Can we see a student to teacher ratio and how do we compare with other districts in our DRG</p>	SLIDE: Student to Teacher Ratio
26	ZO	Spec Ed	<p>83320 Diagnostic Center - can you explain this service and can we “insource” this to our team of professionals?</p>	SLIDE: Diagnostic Center https://www.crec.org/fvdc/

TESOL / MULTILINGUAL STAFFING

28.	CC	TESOL Staffing, Increase	<p>How has the ML population changed/grown compared to staffing?</p>	<p>SLIDE: ML Services & Enrollment</p> <p>While staffing of the ML dept has increased by 1 TESOL teacher in the past five years, ML learner enrollment in SPS has grown by over 70% since 2020 from 153 to 261 learners, speaking 31 different languages. This steady and accelerating growth reflects increasing cultural & linguistic diversity across the district's 12 schools. Students are arriving more linguistically diverse, requiring more service time to address lower reading/writing proficiency in English. The current staffing levels do not allow for that. The trajectory underscores the need for an immediate and proactive expansion of certified TESOL staffing to ensure equitable instructional access & compliance with Title III & state mandates.</p> <p>Over the past two years, Connecticut has significantly raised expectations for how districts serve multilingual learners (MLs) and their families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The 2024 Multilingual Learner Parent Bill of Rights requires districts to clearly communicate in families' home languages, their rights to services and supports, resulting in increased parent outreach and support and daily demands on ML departments. ● More recently, the Connecticut English Learner and Multilingual Learner Framework (December 2025) established a statewide vision focused on access to high-quality instruction and well-prepared educators. Together, these initiatives move ML services beyond basic compliance and expand district responsibilities—making additional certified ML teaching positions essential to meet state expectations and student needs. ● SDE recommends that language instruction happen alongside high-quality grade level instruction by well prepared and skilled educators. It shifts from “support when possible” to providing instruction that is required, protected and aligned with the Connecticut English Language Proficiency (CELP) Standards. ● Current Staffing: 1:87 students ● Elementary Education- 2 TESOL teachers (overseeing 3 schools each) ● Middle School- 0 TESOL teachers, 1 tutor position (.5 and .5) ● High School- 1 TESOL teacher, .5 tutor
29.	CC		<p>What is best practice per the SDE on ML staffing? Can you break it out by elementary, middle, and then high school please.</p>	

TECHNOLOGY

6.	LC	Tech	Can we get more details related to the Extreme license (Ref # 32323)?	Extreme licensing is the license to use our 80 Network Switches and 512 Wireless Access Points providing Wi-Fi and Network access throughout the district. The way the renewal for licenses fell for FY 26, we were able to remove them during the reallocation process. The expense is necessary for FY27.
22.	ZO	Tech	42500 School Based Software: AI Tools what are they - what are we doing with this, what is the expected benefit for students and staff.	SLIDE: AI Tools & Screen Time
38.	SC		What AI tools (#42500) is the admin. looking to integrate across the district?	There are 2 tools currently under consideration for both staff and student use by the committee: Brisk and Magic School. For staff use, we are exploring ChatGPT. Benefits for staff include building awareness, capacity/understanding, and efficiencies. Benefits for students include building awareness, exploring limitations, and learning about responsible and ethical use. Any student use of AI will be age appropriate.
23.	ZO	Tech	Technology: 54400 Technology Equipment: Chromebooks and laptops: can we phase this in vs doing it all at once.	SLIDE: Device Replacement
39.	SC		Can you please remind us of the ChromeBook replacement schedule? QTY 1,575/yr	We have been operating on a replacement cycle since 2021, so this is already a phase-in plan. Students use Chromebooks for 3-4 years: Chromebooks issued in grades 3, 7, and 10. Staff use their devices for 5 years: 20% of staff receive new devices each year.
23.	ZO		Who is responsible for replacement of a damaged chromebook?	Families are responsible for all accidental/intentional damage. We utilize a self-funded insurance program where families can opt in to mitigate some of the costs. Additionally, the repairs are completed by the SPS Tech Staff to reduce cost and device turnaround time, ensuring students and staff have their devices back in working order ASAP.

PURCHASED SERVICES

25	ZO	Purchased Services	64000 Dues and Memberships. Can we get an explanation of what each of these are and the benefit they provide to the district	<p>The largest expenditures in Dues and Memberships are district memberships in the CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE) \$24,552, CT Association of Schools (CAS) \$7,955, CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) \$5,972 and other professional memberships for Middle School, High School and Administrators.</p> <p>The memberships provide opportunities for professional development, updates on legislative issues, provide advocacy at the state level and services like BoardBook used by the district to post all our meeting agendas and minutes, etc.</p>
27	ZO	Purchased Services	Can we look to hire a full time grant writer to make sure we take full advantage of the grant money that is out there for districts.	The district pays an hourly rate for a grant writer when opportunities arise. The Family Resource Center utilizes the services of the grant writer annually to obtain funding from the CFGNB, as well as Main Street, Ion Bank and others.
35	JB	Purchased Services	With the Rubbish Contract increase, have we courted other service contractors?	<p>SLIDE: <u>Rubbish Removal</u></p> <p>A bid (BID 2026-02) was advertised publicly in May 2025. Four contractors submitted bids and the lowest responsible vendor was chosen and awarded through an action by the Board of Education.</p>
37	SC	Purchased Services	What is the length of the copier repair contract (#32313) and what does it cover?	Our copier lease is a five-year agreement expiring in June 2026. The agreement covers the new equipment, maintenance and repair, toner and supplies. The cost is broken out into the rental of equipment (A/C 32510), copier repair (maintenance) (A/C 32313) and copier supplies (A/C 41950).
12.	DDA	Purchased Services	Are there any savings in making outright purchases of items we currently rent? (Ref# 32510)	The district currently leases copiers and mail machines. Leasing this equipment provides the district the ability to budget the cost over a five-year term. Purchasing the equipment outright would be a significant cost in year one. All leased copiers are also covered by maintenance agreements that remain flat during the leasing period. While maintenance agreements can be purchased for owned equipment, these costs increase with the life of the product. Leasing also ensures the district is keeping current with technology and doesn't encounter any challenges running as the networks are updated.

MISCELLANEOUS / OTHER

13.	LC	MISC	Correction to #2 of the first page of reductions and adjustments for future publications of the budget. Should read ' \$500,000 reserves'. Currently missing a zero.	A correction will be made on future editions of the budget.
24.	LC	Adult Ed	Can we get more detail regarding the Adult Education (Ref # 81418)? Since this is a partnership with Bristol Public Schools, and staff is paid by Bristol, what is paid from this Southington budget item?	Bristol and Southington formed a cooperative to split the cost to run our adult education programs. Southington pays our contribution for the adult education program to Bristol. Bristol pays all the staff, makes the purchases of supplies, testing materials (GED), advertises the class schedule, etc. in order to operate the cooperative program.
36	CC	Misc - Major Drivers	Page 4 - All other increases - what makes this number up?	The "All other increases(decreases)- Net" of \$170,847 is made up of small changes to 53 accounts not listed on Page 4. Page 4 highlights the Major Drivers of the \$8.4 million increase. It was not meaningful to list the other 53 accounts with small increases on the major drivers. The other 53 account increases(decreases) are shown in each section of the budget book.
34	CC	Major Drivers - Staffing	Can we put 2 teachers back in the budget from Nexus rather than 4?	A return of teachers to the operating budget would be helpful to the district. The budget as presented includes all four teachers. If only two were added back, the budget would be reduced by \$112,000, a 6.80% increase over the PY.

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FROM WORKSHOP #1

1.	JB	What year of our agreement with NORESKO are we in? Would you be able to send an annual report?	SLIDE: Noresco Report on Energy Savings (YR9) The Town signed an Equipment Lease/Purchase Agreement in May 2014 to finance the cost of energy improvements across the town and schools. The total financed amount was \$12.6 million. The BOE is allocated 72.44% of the payments. Payments will continue until July 2030.
2.	ZO	How is the \$850,000 (NORESCO) payment offset/ get more information about the payment?	
3.	LC	What would the figures look like to hire 1-2 additional FTE for mowing?	SLIDE: Additional Staffing, Mowing The additional cost to the district above the requested 26-27 budget amount for Care of Grounds MOWING ONLY would be ± \$204,000 for year 1 and ± \$80,000/yr. in future years.
4.	JB	Could we look back at the last three budget cycles of insurance costs?	SLIDE: Insurance 3 Years The budget for health insurance includes the cost of medical and dental coverage for employees and the Employer HSA contribution (approximately \$1.4 million for BOE share). In 2024-25 the district had approximately 752 active employees, 5 school lunch employees and 42 retired employees participating in our health plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none">● The school lunch department pays 100% of their cost between employer and employee contributions.● The retirees pay 100% of the cost for their insurance.● Active employees pay a cost share based on their union contract ranging from 13.5% (paraeducators union) up to 23% for Administrators.
5.	SC	Could you provide more clarification about the deliverables of hiring a social worker? Does the Police Department fund social workers? What are the regulations and funding requirements for hiring social workers?	SLIDE: Social Workers Social Workers cases SPD does not have a Social Worker. They have Crisis Intervention Trained officers.
6.	JB	Out of the reported incidents, what percentage of the time are these positions (social workers) making a difference? Is there a way to offload part of our budget to other resources?	Hiring - state certification requirement, IEP mandated service provider

REMINDER ON OPEN BUDGET ITEMS:

1. **SELF INSURANCE** - BOF usually reviews once more prior to BOE adoption - not sure how this will work without the SIC.
2. **MERS %** - last year letter dated January 31st. Currently using a projection of 17.21% budget can be adjusted up or down based on the rates released.
3. **Oil** - 45,000 gallons of heating fuel - not yet locked in