

# Seymour Board of Education Special BOE Meeting – Budget Workshop #2 Minutes

January 12, 2026  
Seymour Middle School  
6:00 pm

Board Members Present:                   Kristen Bruno, Chair  
Chris Champagne, Vice-Chair  
Kristen Harmeling, Secretary  
Lori Nespoli  
Stephan Behuniak  
Pete Kubik 6:17 PM  
Ed Strumello 6:35 PM  
Jay Hatfield 6:57 PM

Others Present:                             Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent  
Salvatore Bucci, Business Manager  
Shannon Levey, Board Clerk

## I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance  
Ms. Bruno called the meeting to order at 6:09 PM

## II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment provides the opportunity for the public to make a comment. It is not a dialogue between the Board and the public. Based upon what is heard during Public Comment, the Board may choose to add a topic to the agenda. If questions are posed that the Chairperson is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairperson's Comments portion of the agenda. The Board will not discuss personnel matters. Comments should be respectful and no longer than 3 minutes in length so that all who wish to comment may have the opportunity to do so. All the public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.

- Public comment called three times, no comment.

## III. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

### A. Review of Needs Assessments for 2026-2027

Dr. Compton stated that she plans to present the Superintendent's Proposed Budget on January 20. She noted that the presentation will highlight where the district currently stands, future priorities, and the reductions that have occurred over the past five years, including how the district has managed those budget cuts. The presentation will also include a review of state and federal mandates.

Administrators will continue working diligently within a limited budget, collaborating closely with Mr. Bucci to maximize resources and explore creative, "outside-the-box" solutions.

**Bungay Elementary School:** Ms. Reid reviewed Bungay Elementary School's needs assessment and reported that there are no Level 1 priorities. The only Level 2 request is for a social worker; however, Bungay is currently meeting student needs through a successful partnership with BH Care.

She explained that the BH Care clinician has been an excellent addition, providing services to students and families who may feel more comfortable in that setting. The clinician also collaborates with psychiatrists and supports medication management. The caseload is full at each school, with waiting lists at both Bungay and CLS. Parents and staff have been very receptive to the program, and the clinician is a Seymour resident.

Ms. Reid's second request is for a multilingual teacher. Ms. Mariano currently serves in this role

and is shared with CLS; however, she does not service Bungay students. Ms. Reid explained that state statute requires additional multilingual staffing if student numbers increase. At present, students are supported through the LAC and tutoring services.

The third request involves after-school clubs and programs, particularly Unified Sports. A staff member has expressed interest in starting a Unified Sports team at the elementary level. Ms. Reid stated that the school hopes to pursue grant funding to support this initiative. Dr. Compton emphasized the importance of Unified Sports at all three levels and expressed interest in prioritizing it districtwide.

Ms. Reid also noted strong collaboration with the Town of Seymour regarding after-school programming, including shared staffing.

Ms. Bruno asked about transportation needs for elementary after-school programs. Ms. Reid clarified that transportation is only required when students travel between schools.

Ms. Harmeling asked about continued funding for BH Care professional development. She noted that the program has a full caseload, increased billing, and appears sustainable moving forward.

**Chatfield-LoPresti School:** Mr. Olechna stated that CLS's needs assessment aligns closely with Ms. Reid's presentation. CLS has no Level 1 priorities at this time, but several ongoing needs remain important to monitor.

He noted that the student population has remained relatively stable, aside from the preschool transition to Bungay. However, if enrollment were to increase, current staffing and scheduling structures would become strained. Coverage is already tight, and the building can be challenging to manage.

Mr. Olechna highlighted concerns with office staffing, noting that administrators are sometimes required to cover the office when staff are absent, which disrupts established procedures and creates operational challenges.

He also mentioned the ongoing need for social work services, which are currently being addressed through BH Care, and expressed interest in Unified Arts programming in the future.

Mr. Champagne asked for clarification regarding mandated physical education hours and potential consequences of not meeting them. Mr. Olechna stated that the issue is currently occurring and that further investigation is needed regarding possible implications.

Dr. Compton explained that the district is technically meeting the mandates due to specific wording in the regulations and stated she would share that documentation with the Board. She also noted concerns related to serving families who speak more than 21 different languages, particularly when office staff are absent. Central Office staff provided coverage last year, but Dr. Compton stated the district needs a plan for substitute secretarial coverage to ensure continuity.

**Seymour Middle School:** Mr. O'Rourke apologized for the length of his needs list but emphasized that his advocacy reflects the needs of Seymour Middle School students.

He identified the lack of tiered intervention supports as the school's most significant concern, noting that many teaching and support positions have been eliminated in recent years. As a result, the school is working to recover from those reductions.

Mr. O'Rourke highlighted the need for tutors who can work under certified staff to provide targeted instruction and intervention. He expressed interest in replicating the elementary model, which includes two certified staff members supported by tutors.

Dr. Compton stated that the district is exploring options such as using Title I funding to increase tutoring support and considering flexibility with SRBI float staff.

Mr. O'Rourke also noted that the multilingual teacher does not currently service middle school students and identified this as a priority need. He acknowledged the need for creative solutions to expand support.

Additional requests included:

- An additional Unified Arts teacher (identified as a lower-priority request)
- Expanded video surveillance

Dr. Compton stated that fully equipping the school would cost approximately \$90,000, which is not feasible at this time. She noted that the current system is effective and that the district plans to pursue grant opportunities to add cameras.

Ms. Harmeling asked about the impact of math tutors. Mr. O'Rourke reported very positive results, noting that 11 tutors were employed from January through May, with measurable improvements in student outcomes. Grant carryover funding allowed four tutors to remain through January the following year, and the loss of tutors during the second half of the year had a significant negative impact.

**Seymour High School:** Mr. Lucke thanked his colleagues and acknowledged the foundational work done at the elementary and middle school levels. He emphasized the importance of recognizing students entering the district directly at the high school with high levels of need. The top priority request is a Library Media Specialist, which is required for NEASC accreditation. The NEASC team will specifically review this position during their visit. Mr. Lucke suggested that this need could potentially be met by hiring a retiree.

He also discussed plans to modernize the media center into a 21st-century learning space, including project-based learning areas, podcasting stations, 3D printers, CNC routers, and collaborative workspaces. Dr. Compton agreed that this is an important need.

Additional priorities include:

- A Cooperative Work Experience teacher (potentially half-time) to support students entering the workforce; research shows improved outcomes for students involved in employment opportunities
- A Special Education teacher to prevent costly outplacements; the teacher would split time between the RISE program and the ABA program, potentially offsetting costs
- Additional paraeducators to support the special education programs

Mr. Lucke identified cybersecurity courses as a lower priority, noting potential funding sources. Facility, infrastructure, and maintenance concerns were also listed. Dr. Compton stated these items would be addressed in a future facilities meeting.

Ms. Harmeling clarified that the district currently serves four ABA students and expects six next year. She noted that students in the ABA program remain in the district until age 22.

**Special Education:** Dr. Boyle presented two Level 1 priority requests:

1. Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) shared between the two elementary schools. Caseloads are projected at 63 students, exceeding recommended levels and surpassing those at CLS. Preschool and CARE programs have lower caseloads due to the intensity of student needs. Caseloads in the 60s make it difficult to adequately meet student needs.
2. CARE Program Support: The CARE program currently serves 21 students across two classrooms (groups of 10 and 11), which is very high given the intensity of need. Enrollment is projected to increase to 26 students next year.

Dr. Boyle stated that while an additional special education teacher is not being requested, caseloads can be reallocated by assigning an existing teacher to the CARE classroom. However, additional paraeducators will be necessary.

She requested that the Board consider reducing the outplacement budget from 20 students to 17–18 students. The projected reduction in outplacement costs could fund the SLP position and three paraeducator positions.

Ms. Bruno clarified that the reduction in outplacements is due to students aging out, graduating, one student returning to Seymour High School, and one new outplacement. She noted that these projections do not account for potential new students moving into the district.

**B. Review of Seymour Board of Education Draft “Roll Forward” 2026-2027 Budget**

Mr. Bucci reported that the current draft “roll forward” budget reflects a 4.9% increase.

Dr. Compton reviewed the district’s financial context, noting that numerous positions have been eliminated over the past five years in order to meet budgetary constraints and maintain compliance with state and federal requirements. She emphasized that these reductions have required the district to operate as efficiently as possible while continuing to meet student needs.

Dr. Compton stated that the district must continue to “think smart” and develop a budget that is both fiscally responsible and likely to gain voter approval.

She confirmed the following key budget dates:

- January 20: Presentation of the Superintendent’s Proposed Budget
- January 27: Board of Education vote on the proposed budget

**C. Review of Mandates**

Dr. Compton reviewed several key mandates impacting the 2026–2027 budget.

She highlighted mandated Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) caseload requirements, noting that increasing caseloads must be addressed to remain compliant. She also emphasized that maintaining accreditation requirements, including the presence of a Library Media Specialist, is essential and non-negotiable.

Dr. Compton noted that current legislation is recommending increased funding for special education and Education Cost Sharing (ECS). However, she cautioned that the district cannot rely on potential legislative increases when developing the budget, as funding levels are uncertain.

She further explained that the district is reviewing anticipated retirements and considering whether some positions can remain unfilled in order to reallocate resources toward mandated and high-priority needs.

**IV. REPORTS**

**A. Board of Education Comments**

1. Chairman’s Report - none
2. Board Member Comments - none

**B. Superintendent’s Report** - Dr. Compton emphasized the urgent need for the Governor to adequately fund special education and fully support public education overall.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM

Prepared by: Shannon Levey, Board Clerk