# Superintendent's Budget Request
## 2026-27 School Year (FY27)

**Dr. Tamu Lucero, Superintendent**
**Ryan Fealey, Chief Financial Officer**

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# District Overview

## Pre-K to Adult Education

- ➔ APPLES Preschool
- ➔ 10 Elementary Schools
- ➔ 3 K-8 Schools
- ➔ 5 Middle Schools
- ➔ 3 High Schools
- ➔ SPS Anchor (alternative secondary)
- ➔ Remote Learning Program (9-12)
- ➔ Adult & Continuing Education

## 2,400+ staff

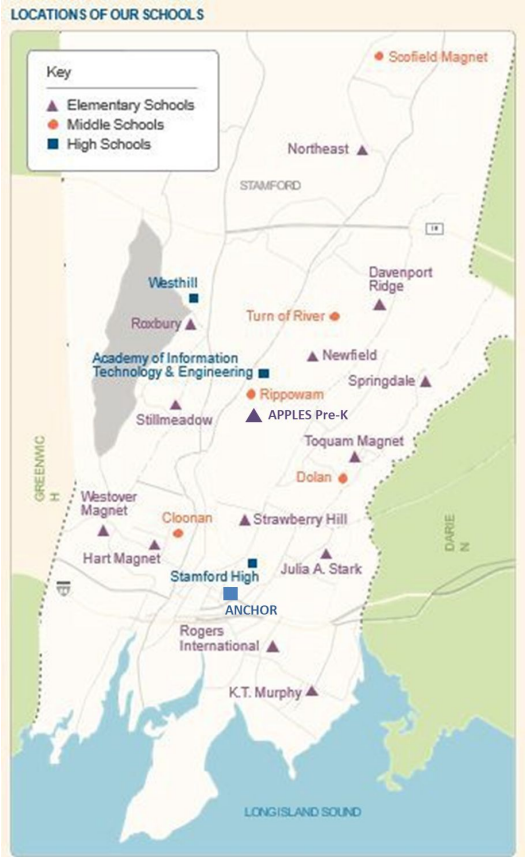
- 86% of staff work directly with students
- 97% of staff work in school buildings

## 15,348* students

- 5th largest district in CT
- 19% multilingual learners
- 18% students with disabilities
- 54% free/reduced price lunch

## 23 Program Sites

- 3M+ sqft of building space
- 300+ acres of property




* Enrollment data as of October 1, 2025

Slide updated November 2025



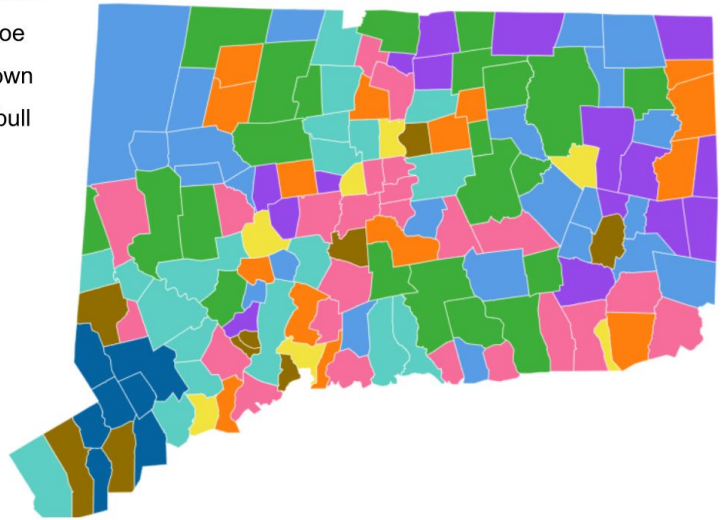
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# District Reference Groups

The Connecticut State Department of Education divides school districts into nine groups called District Reference Groups (DRGs) based on socio-economic status and other factors.

## Fairfield County DRG Assignments

| DRG A | DRG B | DRG C | DRG D | DRG E | DRG F | DRG G | DRG H | DRG I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Darien | Brookfield | New Fairfield | Bethel | NONE | NONE | Stratford | Danbury | Bridgeport |
| Easton | Fairfield | Sherman | Shelton | | | | Norwalk | |
| New Canaan | Greenwich | | | | | | Stamford | |
| Redding | Monroe | | | | | | | |
| Ridgefield | Newtown | | | | | | | |
| Weston | Trumbull | | | | | | | |
| Westport | | | | | | | | |
| Wilton | | | | | | | | |



### DRG Placement Factors

1. Household Income
2. Parental Education
3. Parental Occupation
4. Family Structure
5. Poverty
6. Home Language
7. District Enrollment

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# Funding Stamford Public Schools

## Operating Budget:

- Day-to-Day Operations
- Funded by City of Stamford

## Grants Budget:

- Designated for specific programs or initiatives
- Funding from federal, state, or private sources

**Operating Budget**
**+**
**Grants Budget**
**=**
**Total SPS Budget**

## Capital Budget:

- Major investments and projects, including the Long-Term Facilities Plan
  - **New Westhill High School**, **new Roxbury K-8 School**, and new two-campus **K-8 School in the Cove** neighborhood are **Capital Projects**
- Funding from City of Stamford and State grants
  - State construction grants are funding 80% ($356.8 million) of the new Westhill, 60% ($78 million) of the new Roxbury K-8 and 60% ($94 million) of the new two-campus K-8 in the Cove Neighborhood.

# Budget Timeline

**12-Year (FY15-FY26) Average City-Approved Operating Increase: 2.95%**




**Central Office**

Presents proposed budget to the BOE

**Board of Education**

Can increase, decrease, or approve Superintendent's budget as submitted

**Board of Finance**

Can decrease or approve the budget as submitted by BOE

**Board of Representatives**

Can decrease or approve the budget as submitted by BOF

**Board of Education**

Reallocates operating budget based on $$$ approved by BOR



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# 2026-27 *Operating* Budget Request

| | |
|---|---|
| 2025-26 Operating Budget | $347,026,866 |
| 2026-27 Operating Budget | $365,773,641 |
| **Change** | **5.40%** |

# 2026-27 *Total* Budget (Operating + Grants)

| | |
|---|---|
| 2025-26 Total Budget | $399,179,524 |
| 2026-27 Total Budget | $416,155,415 |
| **Change** | **4.25%** |

**12-Year (FY15-FY26) Average City-Approved Operating Increase: 2.95%**



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# SPS FY27 Budget Request in Context

## Healthcare, Wage Increases, and Special Education Drive Increases Across the Region

| District | Requested Increase | DRG | Financial Pressures Driving Requested Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trumbull | 6.65% | B | 15% increase in benefit costs |
| Norwalk | 6.50% | H | Stabilize existing services rather than expand programming; Cited union contracts, health insurance costs, and special education. |
| Fairfield | 5.96% | B | Wages, health insurance, transportation, special education. |
| Westport | 5.48% | A | 15% increase in benefit costs |
| Stamford | 5.40% | H | Health insurance, contractual wage increases, special education costs. |
| New Canaan | 3.94% | A | Contractual wage increases |
| Greenwich | 3.13% | B | Cites contractual salaries ($5.20 million increase) and transportation costs ($2.35 million increase); **Healthcare costs are NOT INCLUDED in the Greenwich Public Schools budget request** |

# Adjustments

## Step One (October-December)

- Consider staffing requests
- Review proposed projects
- Estimate increases in fixed costs (healthcare, wages, transportation, etc.)
- Identify alternate funding sources through Reserve Analysis (Recommend $1m from Healthcare Reserve)

**Step One:**
**7.93% increase**

## Step Two (December-January)

**Reductions (>$8m) including:**

<u>Projected FY27 Enrollment</u>^

- HS Teachers
- ES Teachers
- Paraeducators
- Adult Ed Counselor
- New Arrivals Teachers

<u>Master Staffing Analysis</u>*

- MS Schedule Change
- TOSAs
- CLC Pre-School Staff
- TL and DL Restructuring
- Sr. Leadership

**Step Two:**
**5.40% increase**

## Step Three (January 7, 2026)

- BOE votes to reinstate 8-Block A/B (5/8) High School Schedule (**+$3m**)

**Step Three:**
**6.27% increase**

## Step Four (January 8-16, 2026)

**Additional $3m in reductions:**

- DOMUS MS Family Advocates
- Free Meals for All Students
- Coordinator for Access and Opportunity
- Welcome Center Reduction
- Elementary Instrumental Music
- Office Support Specialists
- HS Library/Media Specialist
- HS MTSS
- HS Athletic Director
- HS Band Additional Funds (Added FY23)

**Step Four:**
**5.40% increase**

^ Positions eliminated based on projected enrollment
* Master staffing positions deemed fiscally unsustainable

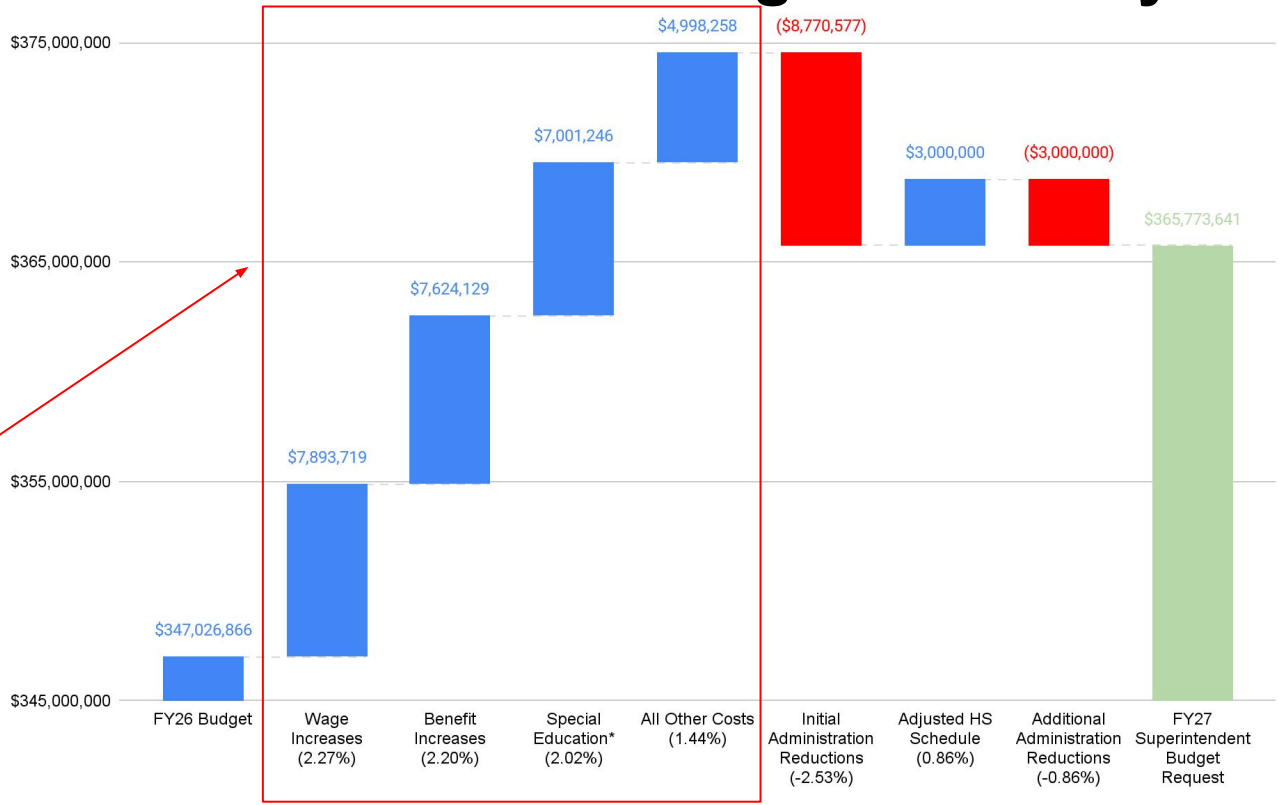


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# Stamford Board of Education FY27 Budget Summary

- **Status quo budget:** Net FTE reduction, no new programs, Flexible Schedule in HS
  - Healthcare/benefit costs: **16% premium increase**
  - Mandated Special Education costs: **28% increase in Out of District Tuition**

Increase required for a status quo budget: 7.93%




*Out of District Tuition, Board, Special Education Transportation, Instructional Supplies

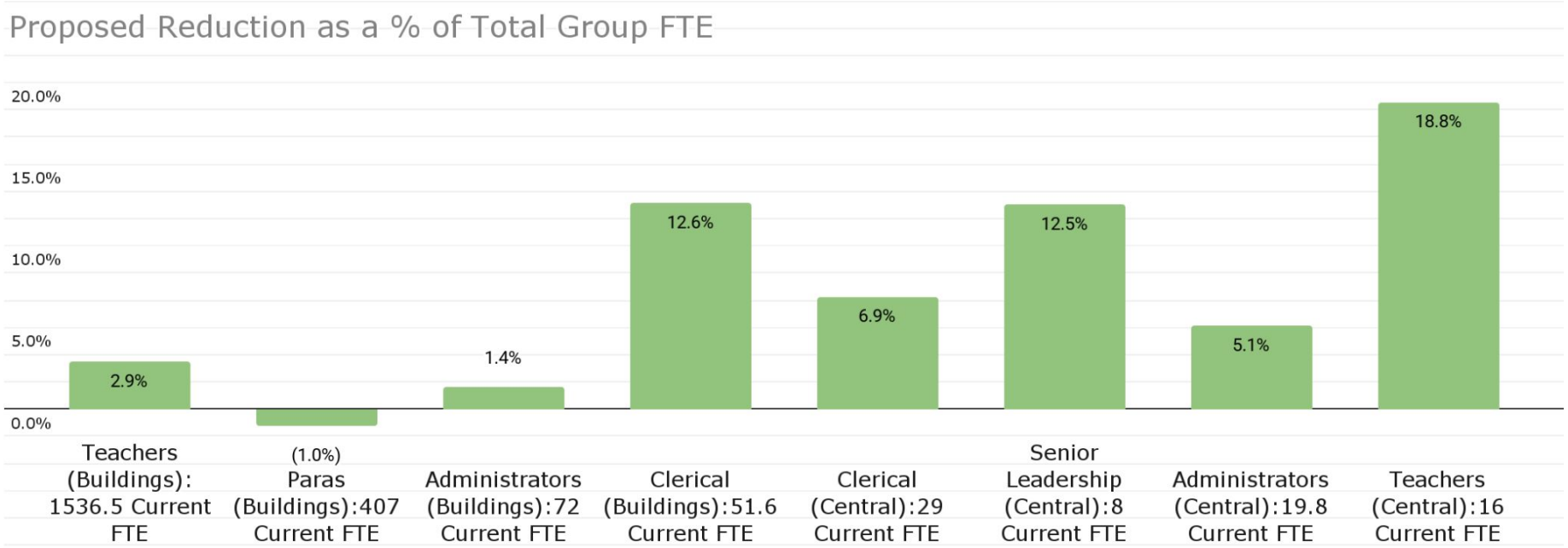


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# FTE Adjustments

| Object | Description | Change in FTE (Operating) | Change in FTE (Grants) | Change in FTE (Net) | Summary* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 510101 | Educators (Certified) | (42.8) | (6.6) | (49.4) | 30.0 HS Teachers (Schedule); (27.0) MS Teachers (Schedule); (18.3) ES Teachers (Enrollment); (19.0) HS Teachers (Enrollment); (8.5) ML/New Arrivals; (4.6) Instrumental Music; (3.0) Pre-School; (4.0) TOSAs; (2.0) MTSS; (1.0) Adult Ed Counselor; +4.6 Special Education; +3.4 Net Contingencies |
| 510102 | Administrators (Certified) | (3.0) | (0.0) | (3.0) | (1.0) Senior Leadership; (1.0) Coordinator for Access and Opportunity; (1.0) Athletic Director |
| 510103 | Teacher Support | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | +1.0 Speech, +1.0 TOSA SEL |
| 510114 | Clerical/Technical | (7.5) | 0.0 | (7.5) | (6.5) Building OSS; (2.0) Central Office Clerical; +1.0 Welcome Center |
| 510115 | Paraeducators | 5.0 | (2.0) | 3.0 | +10.0 Special Education; +4.0 Kindergarten; (10.0) New Arrivals, (1.0) Welcome Center |
| **Sum** | | **(47.3)** | **(7.6)** | **(54.9)** | |
| ***For a comprehensive list, please see Section 5 of the Budget Book.** | | | | | |

# Distribution of Proposed Reductions



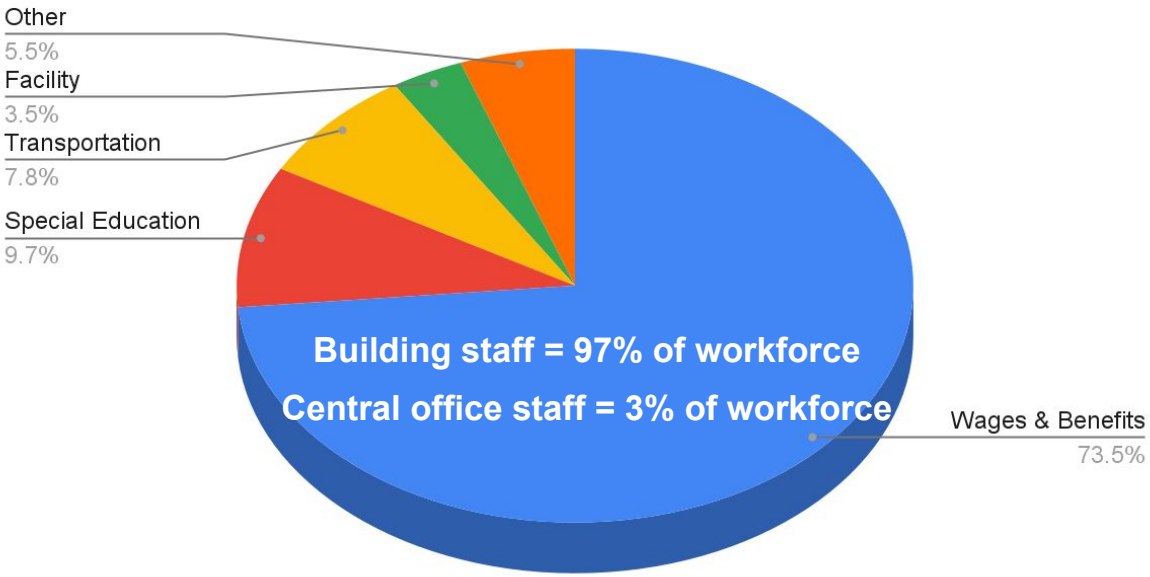



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# Operating Budget by Major Object

| Object Number & Description | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | Variance | Variance % | FY 27 Budget Impact | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 100 Salaries and Wages | $201,492,139 | $206,207,946 | $4,715,807 | 2.34% | 1.36% | Collectively bargained wage increases; reduction of FTE |
| 200 Employee Benefits | $55,652,762 | $61,489,144 | $5,836,382 | 10.49% | 1.68% | Premium increase of 16% offset by use of $1m from reserve; Increase was $7.6m prior to FTE reduction |
| 300 Educational, Rehabilitative, and Legal Services | $13,622,999 | $14,168,429 | $545,430 | 4.00% | 0.16% | |
| 400 Building Upkeep and Repair | $10,611,299 | $9,919,623 | ($691,676) | (6.52%) | (0.20%) | Reduction in Electricity delivery costs; $300k building repair/maintenance budgeted to Building Use Fund |
| 500 Transportation, Out-District Tuition, & Other Svcs | $55,501,877 | $61,366,130 | $5,864,253 | 10.57% | 1.69% | $6.5m increase in Special Education tuition and transportation; $1m reduction in free breakfast/lunch for all students |
| 600 Supplies, Materials, and Heating Fuels | $9,029,949 | $11,389,845 | $2,359,896 | 26.13% | 0.68% | $585k curriculum supplies previously grant funded; $500k SPED supplies incl. for new specialized classrooms; $233k gas heat |
| 700 Equipment | $928,818 | $1,020,875 | $92,057 | 9.91% | 0.03% | |
| 800 Dues and Fees | $187,023 | $211,649 | $24,626 | 13.17% | 0.01% | |
| **Sum** | **$347,026,866** | **$365,773,641** | **$18,746,775** | **5.40%** | **5.40%** | |

# FY27 Budget (All Funding Sources)




**Other Category (5.5%) includes ALL of the following:**

- Classroom Supplies
- Classroom and Office Furniture
- Textbooks/Workbooks
- Athletic Equipment
- Staff Professional Development
- Districtwide Internet Connection
- Districtwide Software
- Instructional Technology
- Property & GL Insurance
- Telephone Costs
- Postage Costs
- Districtwide Copiers
- Dues & Fees

**Fixed costs account for more than 90% of the budget:**

- Wages & Benefits
- Special Education
- Transportation

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, salaries and benefits comprise approximately 80 percent of public-school expenditures in the U.S.

# Average K-5 Class Sizes

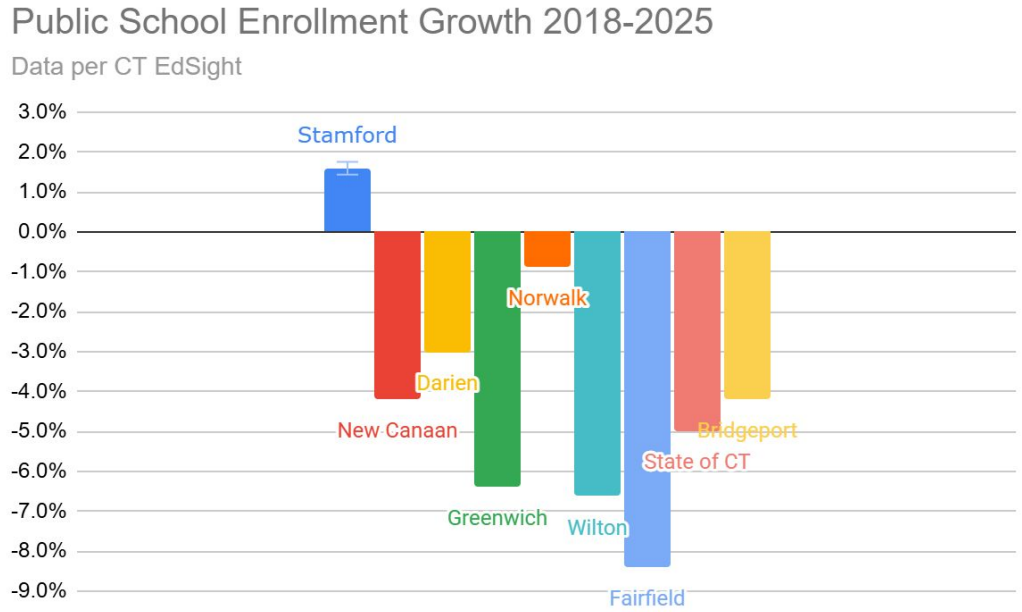
Per the BOE-SEA contract: "*In grades K-5 the class size shall not exceed 25 pupils, and any special education or bi-lingual pupils not present a full school day. If the class size exceeds 25, the Board shall employ an educational assistant. Class size may also be reduced through the addition of professional staff, physical expansion and/or portable classrooms.*"

| | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2025-26 (Actual)** | 18.3 | 19.1 | 20.0 | 20.5 | 21.5 | 21.5 |
| **2026-27 (Projected)** | 20.0 | 19.1 | 19.3 | 21.4 | 21.2 | 22.2 |

# Enrollment Trends

From 2017-18 through 2024- 25:

- SPS enrollment grew by nearly 2%, while enrollment statewide and in many local districts decreased.
- Non-public school enrollment of Stamford residents declined by nearly 4%.



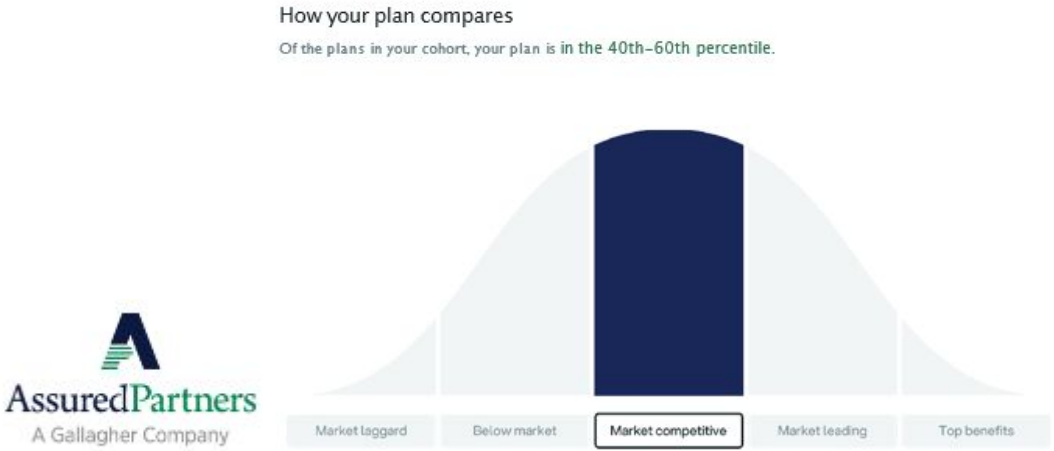

Source: EdSight: https://public-edsight.ct.gov/Students/Enrollment-Dashboard/Enrollment-Report-Legacy?language=en_US



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# Increased Health Insurance Premiums

- The State Partnership Plan (SPP) is currently projecting a **16% increase** for FY27.
- A 1% movement in premiums has approximately a **$480,000** effect on the budget.
- The State Partnership Plan (SPP) normally provides an updated figure in February, and a final figure in late Spring.
- Analysis by healthcare industry consultant continues to show multi-million dollar net savings with SPP vs. a high-deductible alternative. This is based on an analysis of claim data and likely costs for Stop Loss coverage, an HSA, and Administrative expenses (see Appendix).
- For FY25, claims paid for SPS members totaled $54.1m, compared to $47.9m in premiums paid, for a loss ratio of 113%. The plan is benchmarked “Market Competitive” based on SPS’s industry, location, and size.






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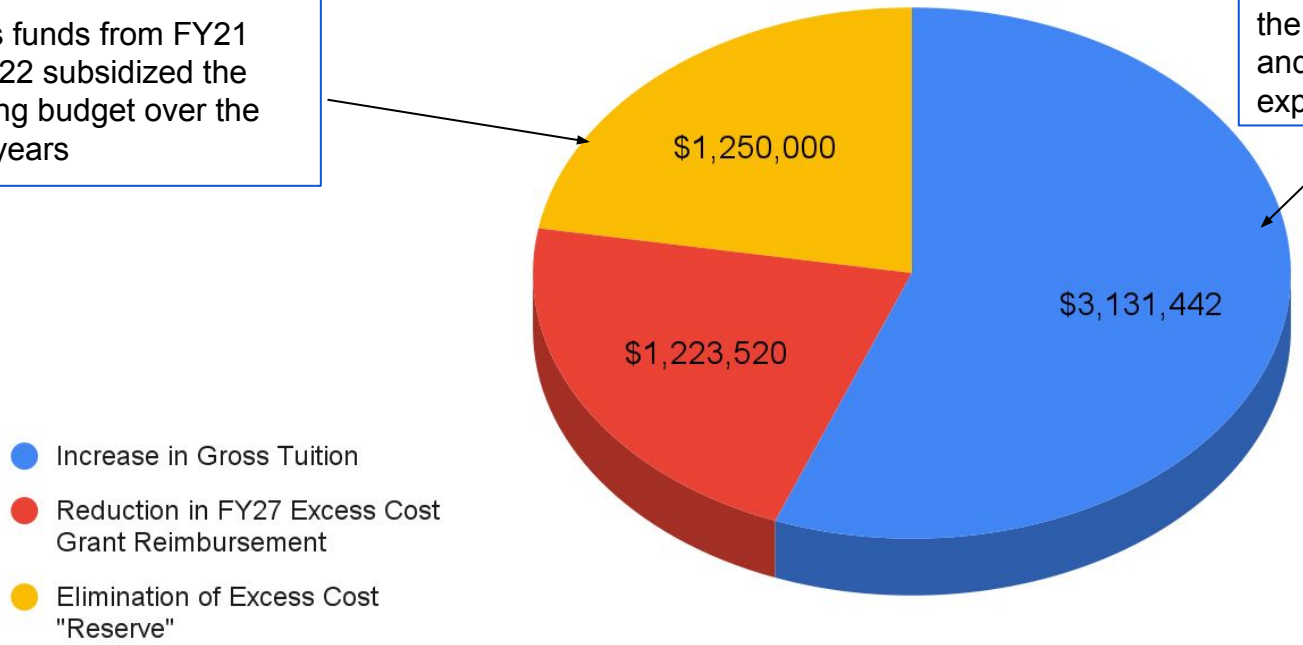
# Out of District Tuition Increase Breakdown

## Students with disabilities (SWD) who require out of district placement represent 8.9% of all SWD and 1.6% of total PreK-12 enrollment

***Out of District Tuition costs could be >$30m more without in-district specialized programming that serves >540 students***

Surplus funds from FY21 and FY22 subsidized the operating budget over the past 4 years

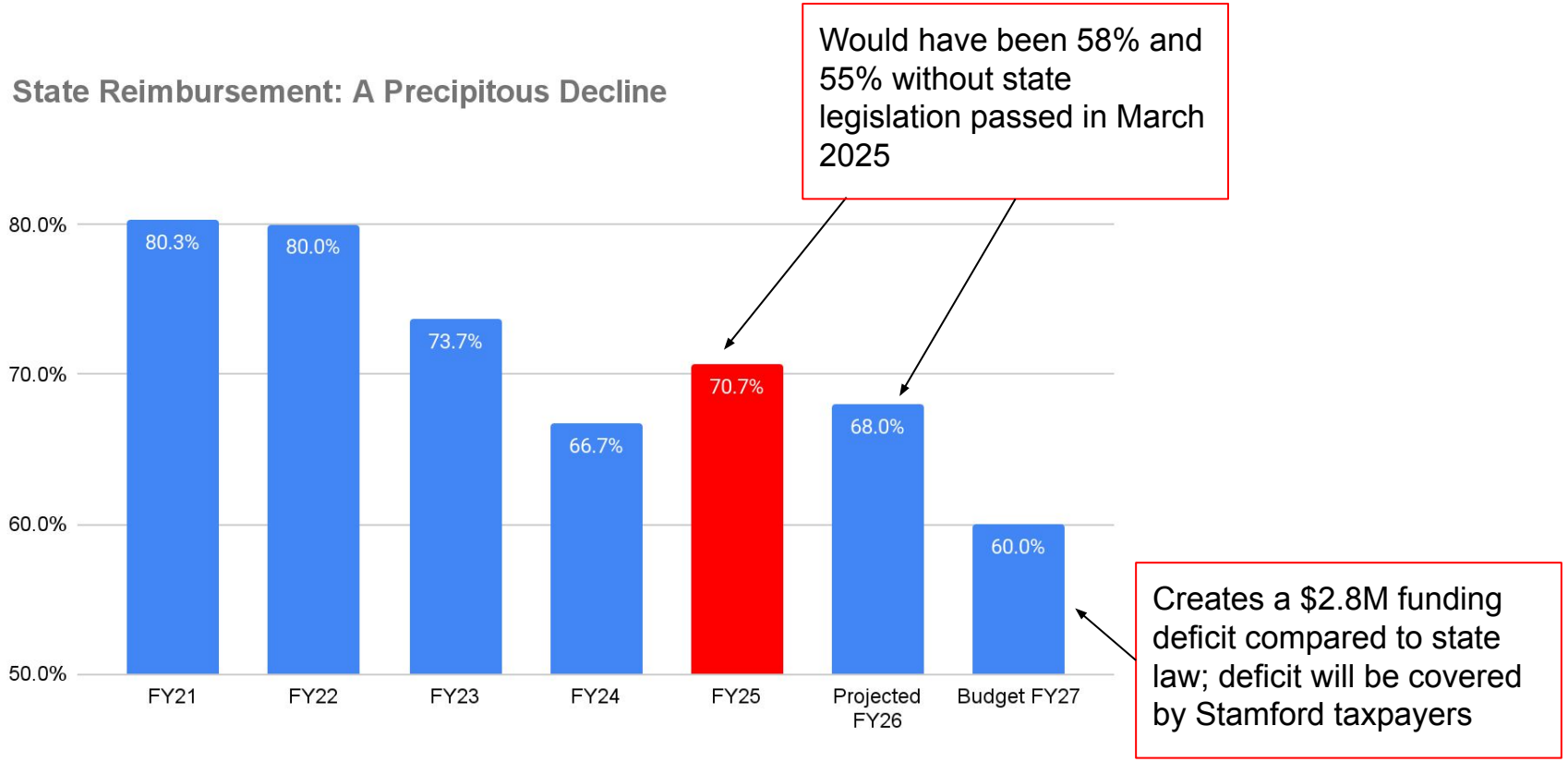
Projecting a 1.7% increase in the number of placements and a 9% increase in expected cost per placement






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# Out of District Tuition: Decrease in State Aid






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# District Snapshot: 2024-25 Spending Comparison

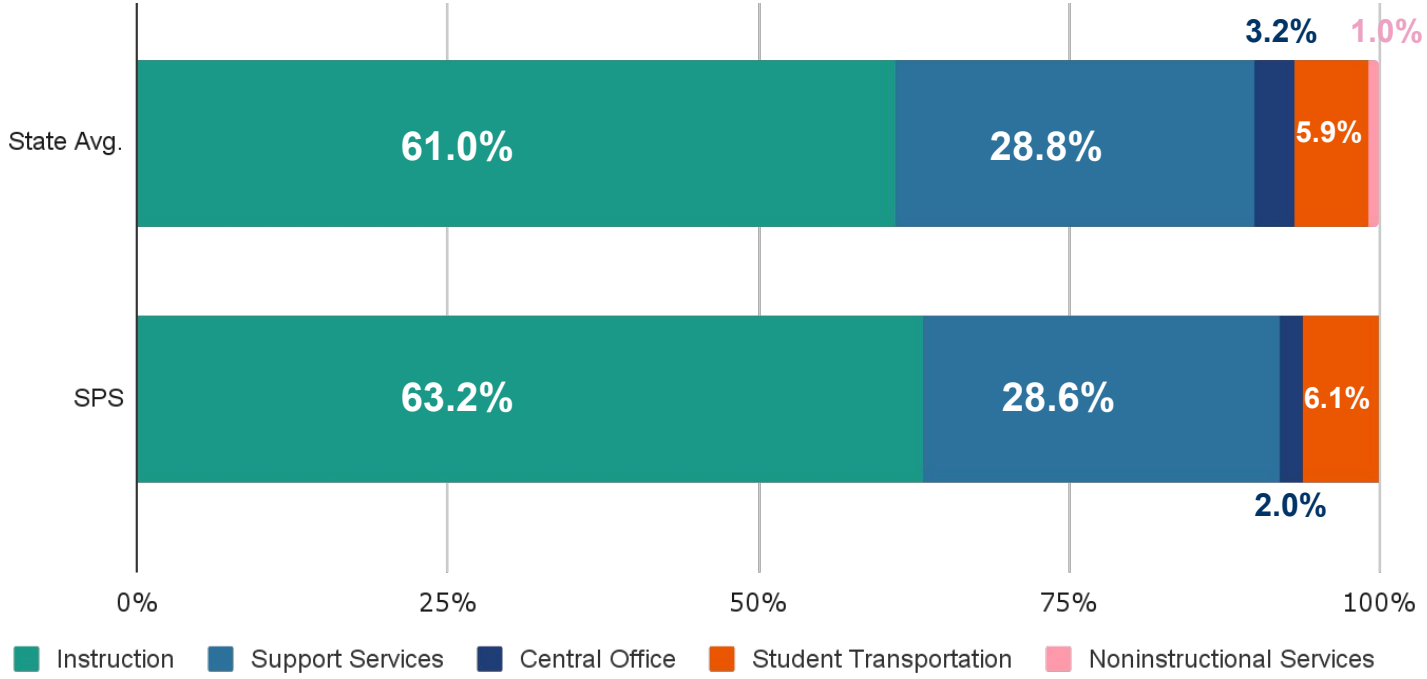
| Rank | District | DRG | Average Daily Membership | NCEP 2024-25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Redding | A | 1,176 | $31,257 |
| 2 | Sherman | C | 333 | $29,218 |
| 3 | Weston | A | 2,052 | $28,973 |
| 4 | Greenwich | B | 8,227 | $28,971 |
| 5 | Westport | A | 5,248 | $27,715 |
| 6 | Easton | A | 1,249 | $26,374 |
| 7 | New Canaan | A | 4,101 | $26,345 |
| 8 | Darien | A | 4,643 | $26,242 |
| 9 | Ridgefield | A | 4,471 | $25,332 |
| 10 | Wilton | A | 3,736 | $24,987 |
| 11 | Fairfield | B | 9,095 | $24,944 |
| 12 | New Fairfield | C | 2,069 | $23,705 |
| 13 | Stamford | H | 15,741 | $23,641 |

| Rank | District | DRG | Average Daily Membership | NCEP 2024-25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | Norwalk | H | 11,808 | $22,702 |
| 15 | Newtown | B | 3,957 | $22,360 |
| 16 | Stratford | G | 6,781 | $21,441 |
| 17 | Brookfield | B | 2,587 | $20,893 |
| 18 | Monroe | B | 3,474 | $20,518 |
| 19 | Trumbull | B | 6,781 | $19,924 |
| 20 | Shelton | D | 4,614 | $19,330 |
| 21 | Bethel | D | 3,190 | $18,721 |
| 22 | Bridgeport | I | 19,752 | $18,328 |
| 23 | Danbury | H | 11,856 | $17,436 |

**Source: Connecticut State Department of Education Bureau of Fiscal Services**

# SPS Expenditures vs. State Average

**Compared to state average, SPS spends MORE on instruction and LESS on central office. To align with the state average, SPS would have to shift *$4.6m* in expenses from instruction to Central Office.**




**On average, districts in CT spend 3.2% of their budgets on Central Office.**

**SPS spends 2.0% of its budget on Central Office.**

Chart courtesy of School + State Finance Project. Source: Connecticut State Department of Education. (2024). EdSight - Fiscal Resources: Per Pupil Expenditures by Function (District), 2022-23. Retrieved from https://public-edsight.ct.gov/overview/per-pupil-expenditures-by-function---district.



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# Lunch Fund Financial Overview

- Since 2022-23, SPS has opted in to the CEP (Community Eligibility Provision), which has enabled SPS to provide all students with free breakfast and lunch.

- Based on Stamford's current demographics (which impact funding), CEP creates an operating loss in the Lunch Fund. The Fund has been able to cover most of these these losses in recent years due to a surplus arising from high COVID meal reimbursements.

- However, the Lunch Fund required a contribution of $1,000,000 from the Operating Budget in FY26 in order to maintain free breakfast and lunch for all students. The Superintendent's FY27 Budget Request **does not include** these funds.

- If Stamford opts out of CEP (free meals) the Operating Budget would need to contribute $250,000 to cover estimated debt arising from unpaid meals.

- Leaving CEP in FY27 will require that families complete applications in order to be eligible for free or reduced lunch, which will put a burden on both families and staff.

# Transportation

- FY27 is Year 3 of a 3-year contract for in-district transportation services that contains annual increases of **9.75**%, **5.5**%, and **5.5**%.

- The cost for school transportation services has been increasing significantly statewide due to a tight labor market for drivers, but Stamford is in a uniquely disadvantageous position.

- Stamford's current vendor owns the bus depot which houses the fleet, dispatch, and mechanical service operations. Without land of our own to offer a competing vendor, it is very difficult to competitively bid this service.

- SPS has been working with the city Operations Department to source potential sites for this purpose.

- SPS issued an RFP for a new provider in Fall 2025, for a contract to begin July 1, 2027. The contract will be presented to the Board for approval in Spring 2026.

# Federal & State Grant Funding is Stagnant

| Grant | Projected FY27 Income | Fully Funded (or COLA) Amount | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Excess Cost Grant** (state program that partially reimburses districts for special education expenses above a specific threshold, usually 4.5 times the average per-pupil cost). ***The Excess Cost Grant does not fully reimburse for all qualifying costs*** | $6,695,103 | $11,158,504 | ($4,463,402) |
| **Title Grants** (federal funding via the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) ***Title Grant Funding has been flat in recent years*** | $10,990,055 | $11,319,756 | ($329,702) |
| **Alliance Grant** (state funding from CT General Assembly) ***General Assembly did not approve cost of living increase in Alliance Grant for FY27*** | $14,024,284 | $14,445,013 | ($420,729) |

Fully funding the Excess Cost Grant and cost-of-living adjusting the Title I and Alliance Grants would reduce the budget request to ***3.90%.***

# Reallocation Scenarios

## Additional reductions to be considered in the event of significant cuts from city boards

### If City Boards approve only a 4% increase, further reductions may include:

Senior Leadership: (1.0) FTE

Teaching and Learning Restructure (Central Office)

Grade Level Leader Stipends

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Teachers): (26.0) FTE

Assistant Principals for Specialized Instruction: (11.0) FTE

Assistant Principals (High Schools): (3.0) FTE

Assistant Principals (Middle Schools): (2.0) FTE

**Additional Reduction:**

**$4.9 million**

### If City Boards approve only a 2.95%* increase, reductions may include:

***Everything in 4% column (at left) PLUS***

Security Guards: (8.0) FTE

Parent Facilitators: (10.0) FTE

Kindergarten Paraeducators: (26.5) FTE

Assistant Principals (Elementary): (7.0) FTE

**Additional Reduction:**

**$8.5 million**

* 12-Year Average City-Approved Operating Increase



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# FY27 BOE Budget Schedule

| | |
|---|---|
| **Tuesday, January 20** | BOE Fiscal Committee: Superintendent's Proposed FY27 Operating Budget Presentation |
| **Tuesday, January 27** | BOE Regular Meeting: FY27 Enrollment and Class Size Presentation |
| **Thursday, February 5** | BOE Public Budget Hearing |
| **Tuesday, February 24** | BOE Regular Meeting: BOE votes on SPS budget to be submitted to Mayor |

*

# 2025 Legislative Session: Thank You, Stamford Delegation!

| Grant or Program | Anticipated FY26 Revenue |
|---|---|
| **ECS (Alliance Grant):** Acceleration of the multi-year phase-in | $2,200,000 |
| **Special Education Expansion and Development (SEED) Grant:** A state-funded initiative established in 2025 to support school districts in providing special education services. | $250,000 |
| **District Repair and Improvement Project:** Provides reimbursement grants to school districts for minor capital repairs and improvements to public school buildings, grounds, and infrastructure. | $600,000 |
| **Roxbury and Westhill New Construction Projects.** Additional state funding was authorized for both new school construction projects. | $434,800,000 |

# 2026 Legislative Session: Advocacy Focus

| Grant or Program | Anticipated FY27 Revenue or Target (If unfunded) |
|---|---|
| **ECS (Alliance Grant):** Cost of living increase | $420,000^ |
| **Special Education Expansion and Development (SEED) Grant:** Continue to fund and provide additional funding. | $250,000* |
| **District Repair and Improvement Project:** Continue to fund and provide additional funding. | $600,000* |
| **School Meals:** Work with the School + State Finance Project to identify state funding | $1,250,000^ |
| **Excess Cost:** Fully fund eligible reimbursements | $11,400,000^ |

* Currently **Funded** in FY27 State Budget

^ Currently **Unfunded** in the FY27 State Budget