

**GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 12 @ 6:00 P.M.
CENTRAL OFFICE, ROOM 11/HYBRID**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Beverly Washington – Chairperson, Adrian Johnson – Vice Chairperson (remote), Andrea Ackerman (remote), Sean Corcoran., Mitch Shinbrot, Ian Thomas (remote/left at 7:44 p.m.), Jay Weitlauf (remote/left at 7:40 pm), Jennifer White, Michael Whitney (remote)

ALSO PRESENT: Susan Austin, Anne Marie Mancini, Lauren Casini, Denise Doolittle, Clint Kennedy, Sam Kilpatrick, Rita Parciak, Amy Ruotolo, Katie Vanasse

I. CALL TO ORDER – Beverly Washington – Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. Special Education District-wide Committee Report (Attachment #1)

Mrs. Doolittle gave an overview of the responsibilities of each Special Education supervisors and herself. Mrs. Doolittle shared the results of the Special Education District-wide Committee Report.

Mr. Johnson suggested having a survey of parents regarding how the special education department is doing separate from the Climate Survey.

Mr. Thomas noted his agreement with Mr. Johnson’s suggestion and have input from the Board regarding the services provided by the special education department.

Mrs. White suggested giving the parents a survey immediately after a parent meeting or a PPT meeting.

Mr. Corcoran noted that he likes Mrs. White’s suggestion.

Mrs. White noted that she was okay with Sean’s suggestion.

Mr. Shinbrot noted that he liked Mr. Corcoran’s suggestion.

Mr. Johnson shared a couple of proposed questions to add to the special education survey. He also suggested to do the survey now while the Committee is still seated.

Mr. Thomas noted that he likes Mr. Johnson suggestions and having an exit survey.

Mr. Weitlauf noted to start with Mrs. White’s and incorporate Mr. Johnson suggestion.

Mr. Whitney supported Mrs. White’s suggestion.

Dr. Ackerman stated that she was not in favor of either suggestion.

Mrs. Washington noted that she was against any survey that singled out the special education department and that she was in favor of Mrs. White’s suggestion to add additional questions to the Climate Survey. She requested questions be sent to the superintendent in advance of the Climate Survey.

The general consensus of the Board was in support of adding questions to the Climate Survey and instituting an exit survey. The Chair requested questions be sent to the Chair in advance of the completion of the Climate Survey.

III. Board of Education Chairperson Report

Mrs. Washington thanked the Board members for coming to the meetings. She noted the topics the Board dealt with during the 2025 school year:

- Budget outcome
- Operational Review
- Controversial issues
- Sadness in the district (death of 2 teachers and the daughter of a teacher)
- Board Goals
- Review of building capacities
- Board business
- Community engagement
- Noted the work of the Board Committees have worked on
- Board approval of the Strategic Plan
- Noted grants approved
- Hiring Rita Parciak as the Finance Director
- Moving Robotics back to the high school
- Referendum
- Positive press
- She noted the membership of the 2026 Board Committees

IV. Budget Work Session (Attachment #2)

Superintendent gave an overview:

- of the drivers of the budget
- noted new Board Goals
- FY 26 & FY27 Financial Obligations

Lauren Casini gave an overview of the District Enrollment and the District enrollment forecast.

Superintendent Austin gave an overview of:

- Elementary
- Secondary
- CIP
- Expenditures Per Pupil – Local Districts
- 2023-2024 Net Expenditures Per Pupil – DRG

Mrs. Parciak gave an overview of the Superintendent FY 27 Proposed Budget

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Ackerman, Corcoran: The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.
PASSED – UNANIMOUSLY



**District-Wide Special Education
Committee**

January 2026

GPS Strategic Plan Pillars & PPS Priorities

1



Accelerate Academic Achievement



2



Cultivate a Rich and Vibrant Learning Community



3



Strengthen Pathways that Develop Post Secondary Readiness



4



Attract and Grow A Skilled and Supported Workforce



5



Improve Operational Efforts and Increase Fiscal Responsibility



Priority #1

- Chronic Absenteeism among students with disabilities
- Time for paraeducators and tutors to communicate about student progress and share updates
- Access for the Paras and Tutors to the “IEP at a Glance” for the students they work with

Prepare all GPS
learners to be
future ready and
globally prepared
citizens

Priority #2

- Differentiation of the new Tier 1 curricula in ELA and Math
- Implementing the Tiered Response for Challenging Behavior
- The process for moving a student to a self-contained classroom or more restrictive setting can be lengthy
- The delivery of special education and related services in the self-contained classrooms due to increased enrollment
- Training additional teachers in structured literacy programs

Cultivate a Rich and
Vibrant Learning
Community

Priority #3

- Communication with parents and students in order to facilitate their connection to state agencies in order to provide vocational services to high school students

Strengthen
Pathways that
Develop Post-
Secondary
Readiness

Priority #4

- Paraeducator vacancies, particularly at FHS
- Increase in staffing in special education and speech and language through the SEED grant

Attract and grow a
Skilled and
Supported
Workforce

Priority #5

- Completing the Initial Referral Timeline in accordance with the state target of 100% compliance
- Program planning between sending and receiving schools particularly due to differences in student schedules
- Supporting staff in completing the work flow for students who move to CT with an out of state IEP

Improve
Operational efforts
and Improve Fiscal
Responsibility

- Tier 1 ELA and Math curriculum including supplemental resources
- Dedicated certified and non-certified staff
- Develop strong family connections which support student learning
- Grow your Own opportunities
- Expertise in IEP compliance from the CO staff
- Strong, collaborative teams in every school
- High quality PD that supports student learning
- Potential for universal Prek for 4 year olds

Strengths and Opportunities in the Special Education and Pupil Services Department

Our Roadmap to Success



District & School
Improvement
Plans



School Climate
Improvement
Plans

Key Performance Indicators and State Data Measure Progress

Groton Public Schools

Superintendent's Projected Budget

2026-2027

January 12, 2026

Board of Education

Beverly Washington, Chairperson

Adrian Johnson, Vice Chairperson/Secretary

Andrea Ackerman

Sean Corcoran

Mitchell Shinbrot

Ian Thomas

Jay Weitlauf

Jennifer White

Mike Whitney



Mission Statement: Teaching & Learning

- BoE Goals:**
- (1) Focus on improving student learning outcomes
 - (2) Continue to align our expenditures with district priorities
 - (3) Review building capacity based on expected demographic trends
 - (4) Improve the flow of the Board's business
 - (5) Community engagement



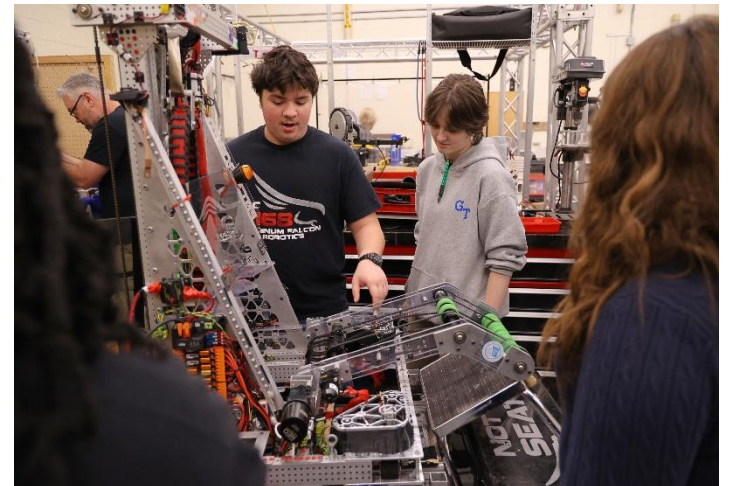
Program Highlights

- Support elementary magnet schools with community partners, offering families neighborhood schools and choice
- Retain all curricular & extracurricular programs
- Continue to upgrade classroom technology, infrastructure, and 1 to 1 computer initiative
- Provide Special Education services to students in preschool-grade 12, including Transition Academy students through the age of twenty-two per law
- Address Social Emotional Learning (SEL) needs of all students PreK-12 with mental health supports
- Continue high quality Tree House child care program before/after school
- Retain School Resource Officers and Security Personnel @ FHS & GMS
- Add School Resource officers at the elementary level supported by COPs grant



Program Highlights

- Enhance literacy instruction using research grounded in the science of reading using an approach that builds content knowledge and a core resource that is aligned, Grades K-8
- Strengthen district coherence in mathematics by aligning district resources and instructional approaches
- Access to grade level curriculum and beyond, including continued increase of number of students participating in AP, IB DP, IB CP, ECE, and UConn accredited courses.
- Align STEAM enrichment opportunities K-12 with Career Pathways 9-12; Expand the Department of Robotics, Engineering, Architecture and Manufacturing/Machining supported by Electric Boat and Perkins supplemental grant
- Plan for an Early Childhood Center to join the Early Childhood Assessment Team (ECAT) at Mary Morrisson, supported by Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood Smart Start Grant. For next year, the plan proposes nine full day PreK and integrated preschool programs for four year old children eligible for kindergarten the following year.



FY26 & FY27 Financial Obligations

Legal Fees

- Contractual Negotiations, Special Education, and Board Matters

Health Insurance

- Continuing to monitor OPEB obligations and contractual health care obligations

Property Costs

- Increases in property cost per Town of Groton

Transportation Costs

- Annual increase in the bus contract
- Increased cost for out of town athletic busses
- Increased cost for out of district transportation

DoD Supplemental Impact Aid Funding Unknown

- DoD supplemental Impact Aid funds have been used for replacement of instructional technology and software expenses, however inflationary costs for both student and staff devices have raised these expenses

Utilities

- Electricity costs will be increasing due to public benefits and overall increase in rates

Contractual & Wage Inflation

- Contractual obligations and CT State Minimum Wage Increase

District Enrollment Trends

Enrollment by Grade History								
GRADE	FY27 Projected	FY26 PSIS	FY25 PSIS	FY24 PSIS	FY23 PSIS	FY22 PSIS	FY21 PSIS	FY20 PSIS
Early Childhood Program	258	191	235	191	199	178	158	194
K	363	291	272	361	362	375	347	403
1	291	272	328	332	350	318	359	332
2	272	299	323	339	316	352	291	336
3	299	308	330	301	336	290	312	334
4	308	323	312	328	286	293	315	307
5	323	301	327	283	294	322	274	326
Subtotal Elem Schools	2114	1,985	2,127	2,135	2,143	2,128	2,056	2,232
6	301	312	296	309	316	289	324	340
7	312	289	292	313	280	302	333	337
8	289	285	296	276	311	314	313	337
Subtotal Middle School	902	886	884	898	907	905	970	1,014
9	285	244	247	271	281	323	292	258
10	244	215	224	250	273	247	238	267
11	215	224	235	252	247	215	250	234
12	224	250	236	246	232	273	241	246
Subtotal High School	968	933	942	1,019	1,033	1,058	1,021	1,005
Subtotal In District Schools	3,984	3,804	3,953	4,052	4,083	4,091	4,047	4,251
Out of District	354	327	365	421	365	370	422	464
Total Enrollment	4,338	4,131	4,318	4,473	4,448	4,461	4,469	4,715

District Enrollment and Forecast- Elementary

School	Grade	PSIS (10/1/25)	Current Enrollment (FY25-26)	Current FTE (FY25-26)	Projected Enrollment (FY26-27)	FTE Needed (FY26-27)	Avg. Class Size (FY26-27)
Catherine Kolnaski Magnet Elementary School							
	K	54	54	4	78	4	20
	1	58	58	3	54	3	18
	2	55	55	3	58	3	19
	3	61	57	3	55	3	18
	4	64	63	3	61	3	20
	5	60	60	3	64	3	21
	Total	352	347	19	370	19	19
Charles Barnum Elementary School							
	K	58	57	3	60	3	20
	1	54	52	3	58	3	19
	2	53	51	3	54	3	18
	3	40	43	2	53	3	18
	4	66	66	3	40	2	20
	5	46	48	2	66	3	22
	Total	317	317	16	331	17	19
Mystic River Magnet School							
	Early Childhood Program	84	94	5	0	0	0
	K	69	71	4	80	4	20
	1	53	57	3	69	4	17
	2	71	74	4	53	3	18
	3	86	85	4	71	4	18
	4	76	78	4	86	4	22
	5	65	67	3	76	4	19
	Total	504	526	27	435	23	19

District Enrollment and Forecast- Elementary

School	Grade	PSIS (10/1/25)	Current Enrollment (FY25-26)	Current FTE (FY25-26)	Projected Enrollment (FY26-27)	FTE Needed (FY26-27)	Avg. Class Size (FY26-27)
Northeast Academy							
	Early Childhood Program	11	14	1	0	0	0
	K	42	42	3	70	4	18
	1	54	55	3	42	3	14
	2	60	58	3	54	3	18
	3	58	56	3	60	3	20
	4	61	60	3	58	3	19
	5	66	65	3	61	3	20
	Total	352	350	19	345	19	18
Thames River Magnet School							
	Early Childhood Program	96	101	5	90	3	AM/PM
	K	68	66	4	75	4	19
	1	53	52	3	68	4	17
	2	60	59	4	53	3	18
	3	63	63	3	60	3	20
	4	56	56	3	63	3	21
	5	64	65	3	56	3	19
	Total	460	462	25	465	23	20
Mary Morrison Early Childhood Center							
	Early Childhood Program				168	10	Full Day
Grand Total		1985	2002	106	2114	111	19

District Enrollment and Forecast- Secondary

School	Grade	PSIS (10/1/25)	Current Enrollment (FY25-26)	Projected Enrollment (FY26-27)
GMS				
	6	312	312	301
	7	289	285	312
	8	285	287	289
	Total	886	884	902
FHS				
	9	244	237	285
	10	215	212	244
	11	224	222	215
	12	250	249	224
	Total	933	920	968
Grand Total				
		1819	1804	1870

CAPITAL PROJECTS – FYE 2026 (000)

FYE 2026 TO FYE 2029

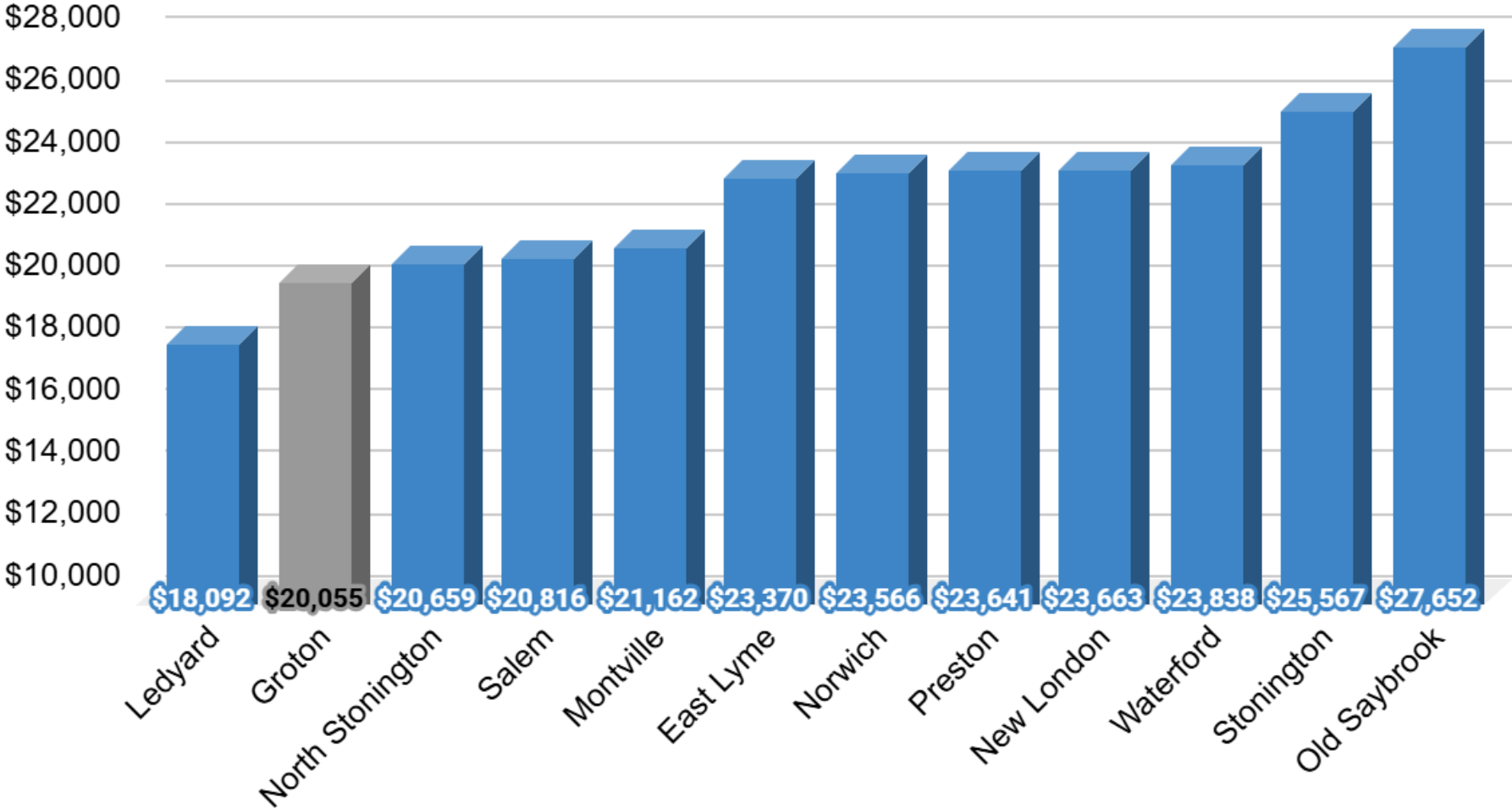
PROJECT SUMMARY (000)

5) EDUCATION	SOURCE	FYE 2026	FYE 2027	FYE 2028	FYE 2029	TOTAL COST
<u>Northeast Academy HVAC Upgrade</u>	C	0	3963	0	0	3963
<u>Fitch High School HVAC Upgrades</u>	C	0	5054	0	0	5054
<u>Charles Barnum HVAC Upgrades</u>	C	0	2318	0	0	2318
<u>Catherine Kolnaski HVAC Upgrades</u>	C	0	4191	0	0	4191
<u>HVAC Testing/Repair (per Legislation)</u>	C	0	200	0	0	200
<u>Fitch High School Culinary Arts</u>	C	0	600	0	0	600
<u>Fitch High School Auditorium Upgrades Phase II</u>	C	0	75	0	0	75
<u>Safety & Security</u>	C	0	333	0	0	333
<u>Financial System Implementation</u>	C	0	100	0	0	100
<u>Digital Broadcast Device</u>	C	0	55	0	0	55
TOTAL	C	0	16889	0	0	16889
Capital Reserve Fund	C	0	250	250	0	500
General Obligation Bonds	G	0	0	0	0	0
Other	O	0	0	0	0	0

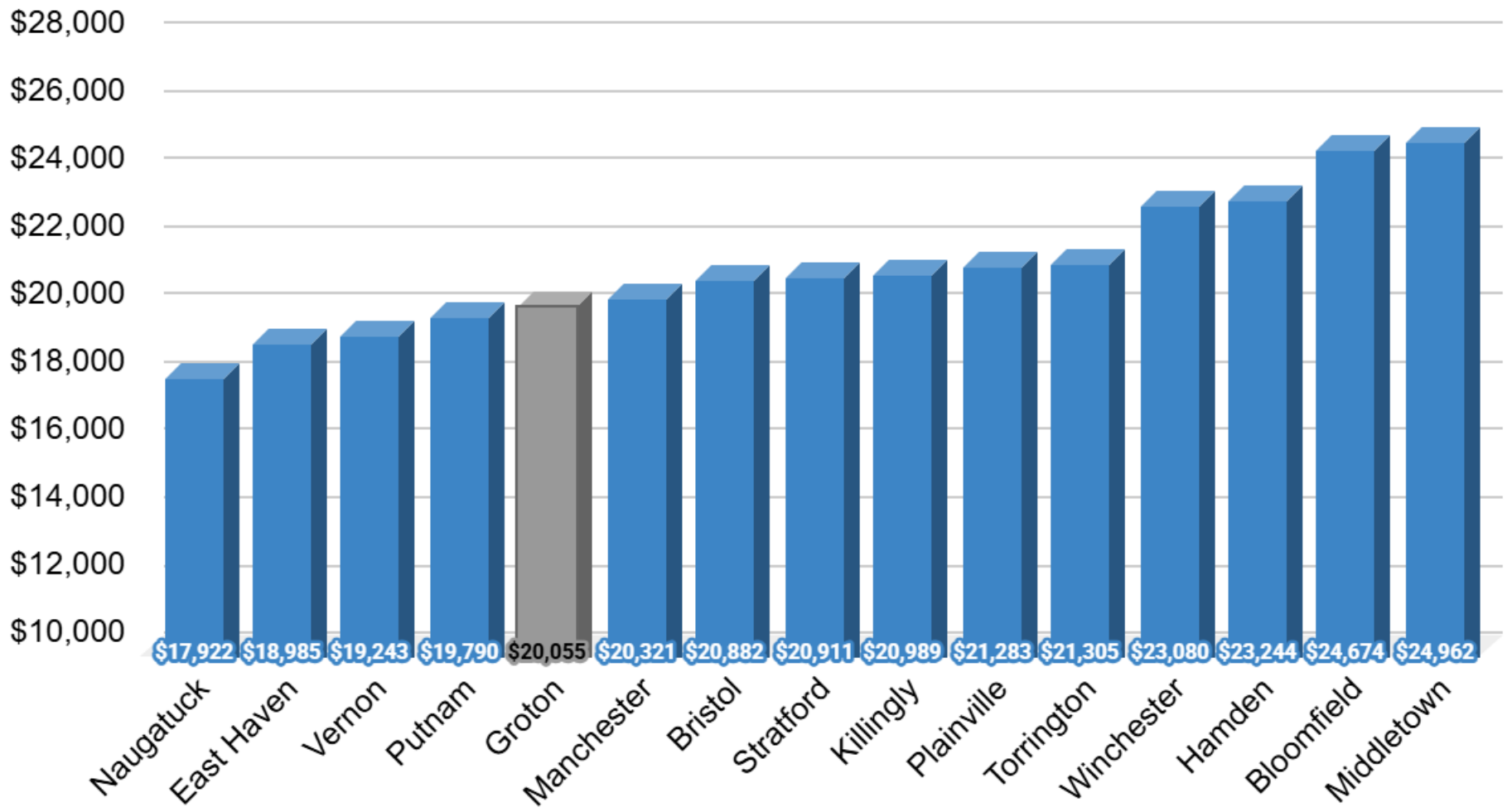
Expenditure Per Pupil (Per CSDE)

School Year	Groton	CT Avg	Variance	% Variance
FY2017-2018	\$16,776	\$16,824	(\$48)	-0.29%
FY2018-2019	\$16,945	\$17,292	(\$347)	-2.05%
FY2019-2020	\$17,068	\$17,483	(\$415)	-2.43%
FY2020-2021	\$18,359	\$18,731	(\$372)	-2.03%
FY2021-2022	\$18,980	\$19,734	(\$754)	-3.97%
FY2022-2023	\$19,706	\$21,143	(\$1,437)	-7.29%
FY2023-2024	\$20,055	\$22,054	(\$1,999)	-9.97%

2023-2024 Net Expenditures Per Pupil- Local Districts



2023-2024 Net Expenditures Per Pupil - DRG



Superintendent's FY27 Proposed Budget

MAJOR OBJECT	DESCRIPTION	FY26 CURRENT BUDGET	FY27 PRELIMINARY PROJECTED BUDGET	INCREASE (DECREASE)	%
100	SALARIES & WAGES	\$ 56,695,768.43	\$ 59,672,035.00	\$ 2,976,267.00	5.2%
200	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	\$ 13,530,531.14	\$ 15,660,569.00	\$ 2,130,038.00	15.7%
300	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	\$ 2,758,952.67	\$ 2,667,776.00	(\$ 91,177.00)	-3.3%
400	PURCHASED PROPERTY SERVICES	\$ 1,218,450.00	\$ 1,286,926.00	\$ 68,476.00	5.6%
500	OTHER PURCHASED SERVICES (TRANS, LIAB INS, COMM, TUITION)	\$ 12,737,039.65	\$ 13,626,837.00	\$ 889,798.00	7.0%
600	SUPPLIES (INCLUDING UTILITIES)	\$ 4,698,975.30	\$ 5,691,221.00	\$ 992,246.00	21.1%
700	EQUIPMENT	\$ 262,032.00	\$ 402,010.00	\$ 139,978.00	53.4%
800	DUES & FEES	\$ 102,825.81	\$ 106,405.00	\$ 3,580.00	3.5%
	TOTALS	\$ 92,004,575.00	\$ 99,113,779.00	\$ 7,109,206.00	7.7%

