



# Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Budget

Ashland Public Schools

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Presented to the School Committee – March 11, 2026

**James E. Adams**

Superintendent

**Christopher Mathieu**





Director of Finance & Operations

**Michael Caira**

Assistant Superintendent



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-  "This budget is personnel-driven — **79% of all costs are salaries and benefits**, reflecting our investment in the educators who serve our students daily."
-  "Our primary fiscal goal this year is **ending the district's reliance on one-time School Choice revolving funds** to cover core operational costs."
-  "We have **two paths forward**. One requires community investment through an override. One does not — but comes with real consequences for programs and staffing."
-  "Every decision in this budget reflects our commitment to **students first** — protecting their classroom experience and support systems."

**Jim Adams**

Superintendent of Schools

# District at a Glance



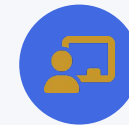
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Schools



361

FTE Employees



223

FTE Teachers



2,818

Students (2025–2026)



\$17,922

Per-Pupil Expenditure



\$11,996,178

Total State Aid Funding

## © MISSION

"We are committed every minute, every hour, every day, to every student."

## 🎯 VISION

To be a model district that creates a culture of inclusivity for our diverse students and staff who:

- feel safe and supported
- are empowered with the academic and social-emotional skills to pursue their chosen path
- embrace their roles as positive contributors to local and global communities

# The True Cost of Running APS



Total True Operating Cost

~\$48.9 M

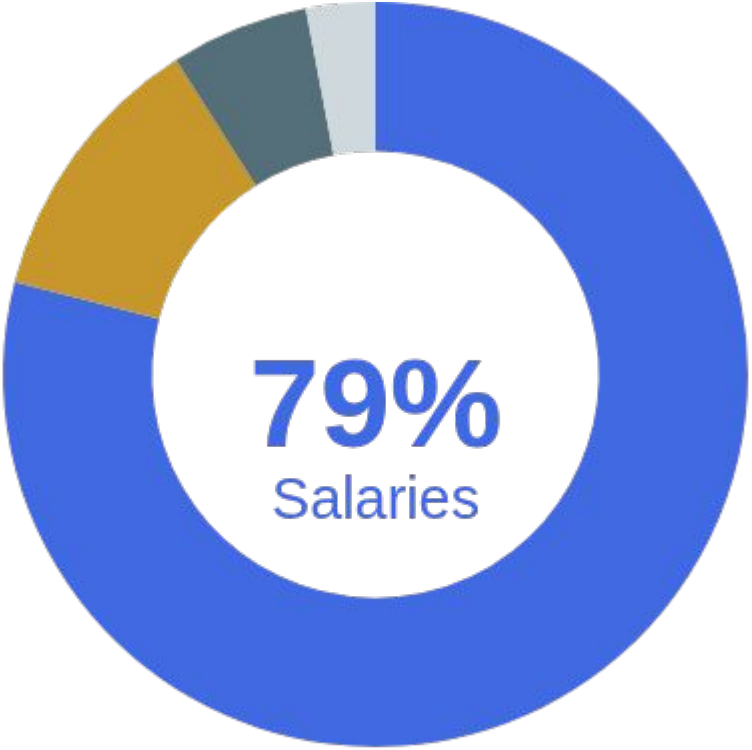
 Town Appropriation (FY26) \$44,486,864

 Grants & Revolving Funds ~\$4,400,000



79% of the total budget is dedicated to personnel salaries.

Budget Allocation Breakdown



- Salaries (79%)
- Special Ed & Transportation (12%)
- Utilities & Operations (6%)
- Other Expenses (3%)

# What Has Changed Since Last School Committee February 25

Budget Proposal Context & Overview



## Original 2.55% Proposal

This initial plan required the elimination of **20.6 FTE** positions to meet strict budget constraints.

## School Committee Feedback

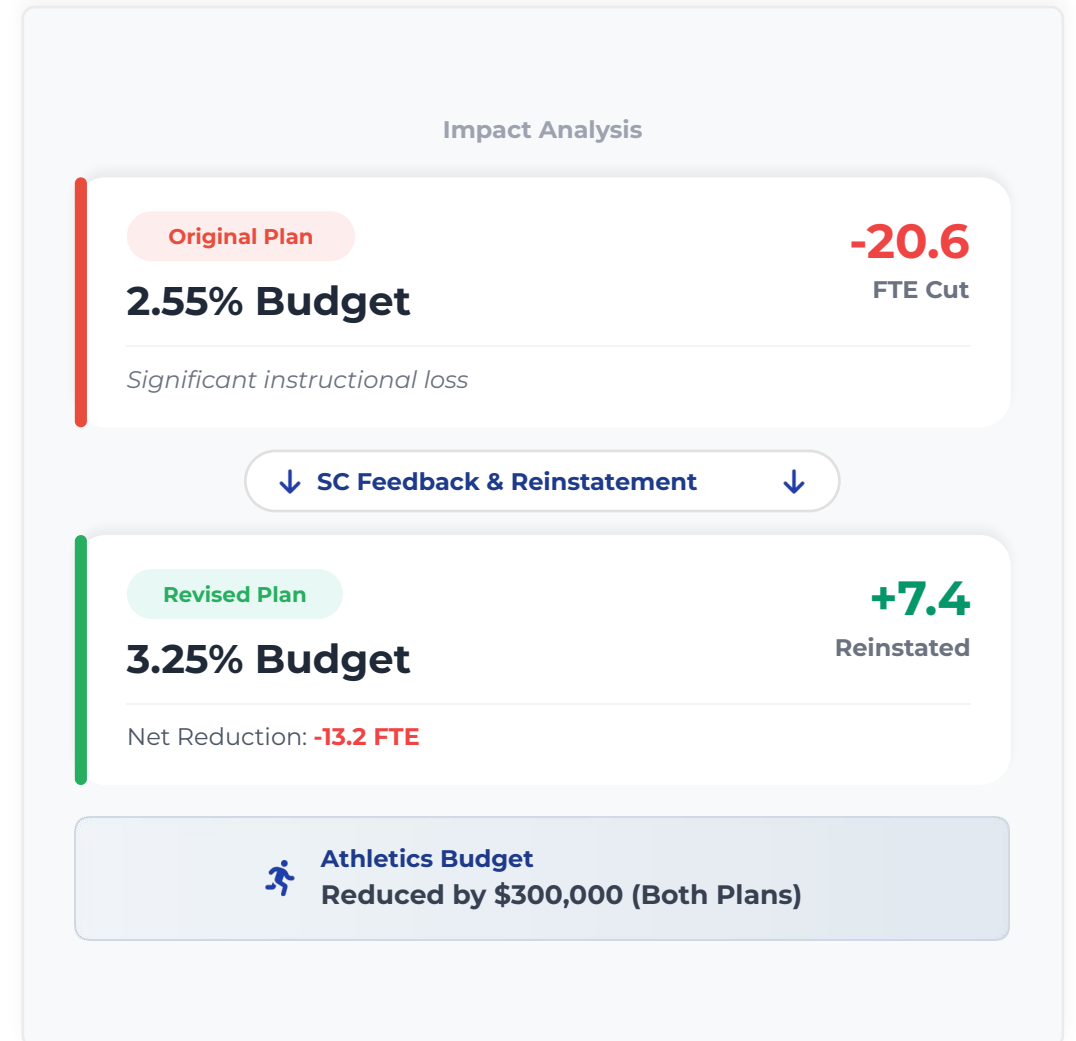
Committee members indicated that specific instructional positions must be preserved to support student needs.

## Shift to 3.25% Budget

This revised budget reinstates **7.4 FTE** positions while maintaining 13.2 FTE in planned reductions.

## Funding Strategy

Positions not covered by Town Appropriations would require **School Choice fund** support.



# 2.55% Budget Reductions on February 25, 2026



● Budget Reduction ● Retirement ● Not Filled/Vacant

	Position	FTE	Status
	Business Office (x2)	2.0	Not Filled
	Director of SEL	1.0	Reduction
	Facilities Staff	1.0	Not Filled
	SPED Coordinator	1.0	Reduction
	AHS World Language (French)	0.4	Reduction
	AHS ESP	1.0	Not Filled
	AHS Science	1.0	Retirement
	AHS Social Studies	1.0	Reduction
	AHS BRYT Clinical Coord.	1.0	Reduction
	AMS Adjustment Counselor	1.0	Reduction
	AMS Spanish (No 6-7)	1.0	Reduction

	Position	FTE	Status
	Literacy Coach	1.0	Reduction
	Mindess Teacher (SPED)	1.0	Retirement
	Mindess Teacher	1.0	Retirement
	Mindess Specials Teacher	1.0	Retirement
	Mindess Teacher	1.0	Retirement
	District Nursing Staff	1.2	Retirement
	Warren Teacher	1.0	Retirement
	Kindergarten ESP	1.0	Reduction
	Warren K Teacher	1.0	Reduction

Total Proposed Impact  
20.6 FTE Eliminated

# School Committee Feedback on February 25, 2026



Positions to Reinstate at 3.25% Budget Level



## Literacy Coach

Instructional Support

1.0 FTE



## AHS Social Studies

Classroom Instruction

1.0 FTE



## AMS Adjustment Counselor

Student Support

1.0 FTE



## Kindergarten ESP

Classroom Support

1.0 FTE



## AHS World Language (French)

Classroom Instruction

0.4 FTE



## AHS BRYT Clinical Coord.

Student Support

1.0 FTE



## Mindess Teacher

Classroom Instruction

1.0 FTE



## Warren K Teacher

Classroom Instruction

1.0 FTE



## Strategic Impact

All reinstated positions are instructional or student support roles — directly impacting students and classrooms. These were prioritized over administrative or non-student facing roles based on the committee's explicit feedback.



Total Reinstated

7.4 FTE

# Positions Reinstated per School Committee Feedback



Moving from 2.55% to 3.25% Budget — 8.4 FTE Restored

✓	Position Title	FTE	Category	Impact Area
✓	Literacy Coach	1.0	Instructional Support	District-wide
✓	AHS World Language – French	0.4	Classroom Instruction	High School
✓	AHS Social Studies	1.0	Classroom Instruction	High School
✓	AHS BRYT Clinical Coordinator	1.0	Student Services	High School
✓	AMS Adjustment Counselor	1.0	Student Services	Middle School
✓	Mindess Teacher	1.0	Elementary Instruction	Elementary
✓	K ESP	1.0	Elementary Support	Elementary
✓	Warren K Teacher	1.0	Elementary Instruction	Elementary
Total Reinstated:		7.4 FTE	<i>(These positions were originally cut in 2.55% plan)</i>	



## Student Impact Focus

All reinstated positions are **instructional or student support roles** with direct student impact. These were originally categorized as "Budget Reductions" — meaning they are real investments restored, not retirements or vacancies.

# Two Budget Paths for FY27



## Option 1

### 6.18% Operational Override

**\$47,236,865**

↑ \$2.75M Increase over FY26

- 🛡️ **Structural Stabilization:** Secures long-term financial health.
- ✅ Moves **\$1.1M** in recurring salaries to the general operating budget.
- ✅ Fully funds **Athletics (\$300k)**, eliminating the structural deficit.
- ✅ Ends reliance on variable School Choice funds for core operations.

## Option 2

### 3.25% Budget (No Override)

**\$45,931,775**

↑ \$1.44M Increase over FY26

- ℹ️ Maintains services only in the **short term**.
- ⚠️ Continues high-risk reliance on School Choice funds for salaries & ops.
- ➖ **Athletics Deficit:** \$300k gap remains, forcing program cuts or fee hikes.
- 💀 **Fiscal Cliff:** School Choice funds projected to be depleted by FY28.



Note: Both budget scenarios include the same reduction of 13.2 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions.

# Option 1 — 6.18% Operational Override



Total Budget Amount

**\$47,236,865**

Increase Over FY26

**+\$2,750,000**

 **6.18% Increase**

✓ Moves **\$1.1 Million** in recurring salaries and operating expenses from revolving funds back to the general operating budget.

✓ Covers **\$293,000** in operating expenses currently funded by volatile School Choice funds.

✓ Properly funds **Athletics at \$300,000**, completely eliminating the structural deficit.

✓ Supports critical positions including athletic field management & assistant athletic director.

✓ Frees up revolving funds for one-time capital investments instead of recurring costs.

✓ Provides **long-term fiscal stability** by correcting structural funding imbalances.



**"This is a stabilization budget — not a growth budget."**

The primary goal is to secure the district's financial foundation for the future.

# Option 2 — 3.25% Budget (No Override)




Total Budget Amount


**\$45,931,775**


Increase Over FY26

**+\$1,444,911**

 **3.25%  
Increase**


 Maintains current services only in the **short term**, deferring structural issues.

 Continues relying on School Choice funds for **8 teacher salaries (\$709,000)**.

 Funds **\$450,000** in recurring operating expenses through volatile revolving accounts.

 Athletics faces a **\$300,000 structural deficit**, requiring program cuts or fee hikes.

 Fees are already the **highest in the Tri-Valley League**; increases burden families further.

 Increases structural risk by using one-time funds for permanent staff positions.










**WARNING: School Choice funds projected to be depleted by FY28.**

This depletion will likely trigger deeper staffing cuts and significantly larger class sizes in future budget cycles.

# Positions Eliminated in ALL Budget Scenarios



<b>Retirements &amp; Non-Filled Positions</b> Natural Attrition / Unfilled Vacancies	
 <b>Business Office (x2)</b> Unfilled Vacancies	2.0
 <b>Facilities Staff</b> Unfilled Vacancy	1.0
 <b>AHS ESP</b> Unfilled Vacancy	1.0
 <b>AHS Science</b> Retirement	1.0
 <b>Mindess Teachers (x3)</b> SPED, Classroom, Specials (Retirements)	3.0
 <b>District Nursing</b> Retirement	1.2
 <b>Warren Teacher</b> Retirement	1.0
<b>Total Attrition</b>	<b>10.2 FTE</b>

<b>Budget Reductions</b> Programmatic Eliminations	
 <b>Director of SEL</b> Administrative Reduction	1.0
 <b>SPED Coordinator</b> Administrative Reduction	1.0
 <b>AMS Spanish (No 6-7)</b> Program Change	1.0
<p><i>These reductions impact programming and administrative capacity but were deemed necessary to meet fiscal constraints.</i></p>	
<b>Total Reductions</b>	<b>3.0 FTE</b>

# Program & Service Impacts Under 3.25% Budget



## Middle School Spanish Eliminated

World Language program cut for Grades 6-7 (AMS Spanish position), reducing early language exposure.



## Director of SEL Eliminated

Removal of dedicated Social-Emotional Learning oversight reduces support for district-wide student wellbeing.



## Nursing Reduction

District nursing contact time reduced by 1.2 FTE, impacting health services availability and coverage.



## Class Size Increases

Reductions in teaching staff projected to cause slight class size increases in affected grade levels.



## SPED Coordinator Reduction

Loss of 1.0 FTE increases caseload and coordination burden on remaining Special Education staff.



## Athletics Budget Gap

Athletics faces a **\$300,000 deficit**, putting sports programming at risk without new fees or cuts.



## Structural Dependency Risk

Continued reliance on School Choice funds for core salaries through FY27-FY28 creates a structural deficit.



## Consequence of Inaction

These impacts are direct consequences of remaining below an override level. They represent permanent reductions in student services, not just efficiencies.

# Revolving Fund Use Scenarios — Fiscal Year 2027



Fund Category	Beginning Balance	2.25% (FY'27 End)	3.25% (FY'27 End)	Override (FY'27 End)
Athletics	\$646,161	\$393,161	\$393,161	\$693,161
Building Rental	\$843,110	\$853,348	\$853,348	\$853,348
School Bus Revolving	\$951,208	\$951,208	\$951,208	\$951,208
<b>School Choice</b>	\$1,786,556	<b>\$430,111</b>	<b>\$874,114</b>	<b>\$1,879,203</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,227,035</b>	<b>\$2,627,828</b>	<b>\$3,071,834</b>	<b>\$4,376,920</b>



## Level Funded Risk

Under a Level Funded scenario, the **School Choice balance drops to just \$55,727** — nearly depleted in a single year, leaving zero cushion for FY 28.




## Structural Deficit Warning

Even at the 3.25% budget level, School Choice ends FY27 with only **\$874,114**. This is **insufficient** to fund ongoing operations into FY28 without major cuts.

# Revolving Fund Projections — Fiscal Year 2028 Fiscal Cliff



Fund Category	FY 28 Beginning Balance (2.25%)	FY 28 Revenue	FY 28 Expense	FY28 Ending Balance (2.25%)	FY28 Ending Balance (3.25%)
Athletics	\$393,161	\$275,000	\$528,000	\$140,161	\$140,161
Building Rental	\$853,348	\$173,344	\$163,106	\$863,586	\$863,586
School Bus Revolving	\$951,208	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$951,208	\$951,208
 School Choice	\$430,111	\$250,000	\$1,606,445	(\$926,334)	(\$38,328)
<b>Total All Funds</b>	<b>\$2,627,828</b>	<b>\$998,344</b>	<b>\$2,597,551</b>	<b>\$1,028,621</b>	<b>\$1,916,627</b>

## FISCAL CLIFF WARNING



**Scenario 2.25%:** School Choice deficit hits  
**(\$926,334)**

**Scenario 3.25%:** School Choice deficit hits  
**(\$38,328) - Additional \$888,006 in School Choice**

**Conclusion:** The district cannot sustain operations without an override or major program cuts beyond FY27.

## Funding Context



### Separate Appropriation Required

Capital needs are **NOT included** in the operating budget. These projects require separate Town Meeting appropriation or debt exclusion votes.



### Federal Grants Limitations

While the district receives ~\$323k in Federal Grants (Title I-IV), these funds support targeted professional development and salaries. They **cannot** replace general fund obligations or fund capital projects.



### Infrastructure Impact

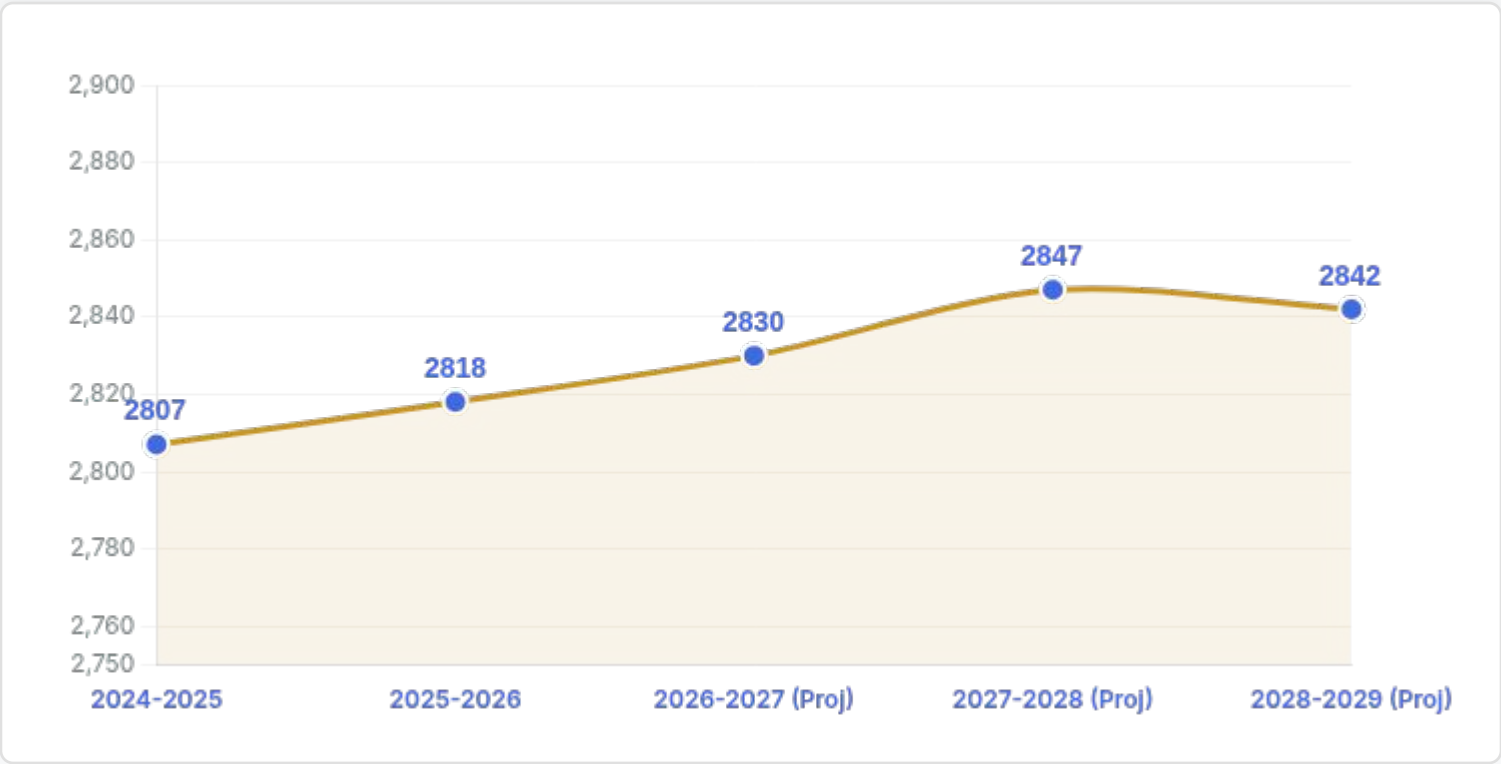
Deferring these capital investments creates long-term liability for the town. The facility and technology needs (\$7.4M) are critical for maintaining safe and effective learning environments.

Project / Investment Area	Estimated Cost
<b>AHS Roof Replacement</b> Critical facility preservation	<b>\$3,600,000</b>
<b>AMS Turf Field</b> Replacement due to end of lifecycle	<b>\$1,300,000</b>
<b>AHS Turf Field</b> Replacement due to end of lifecycle	<b>\$1,300,000</b>
<b>Literacy Program Materials</b> District-wide curriculum update	<b>\$900,000</b>
<b>Facility &amp; Technology Needs</b> Comprehensive infrastructure updates	<b>\$7,413,655</b>
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL NEEDS</b>	<b>\$14,513,655</b>

# APS Enrollment — Trends & Projections



Enrollment is projected to remain relatively stable with a slight upward trend through FY28, providing a consistent base for long-term planning.



**Current Enrollment**  
 **2,818**  
2025-2026 Academic Year

**Projected Next Year**  
 **2,830**  
2026-2027 (+12 Students)

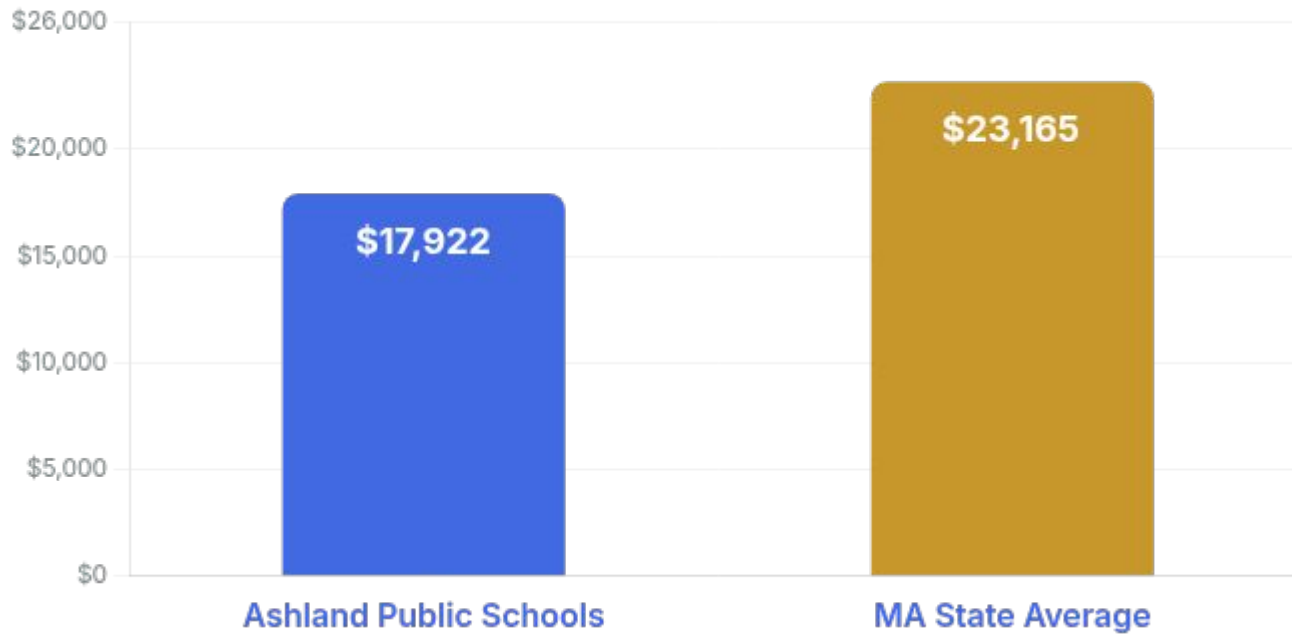
**Projected Peak**  
 **2,847**  
2027-2028 Academic Year

**i** **Stable enrollment supports planning, but does not offset rising costs.**  
While student numbers are flat to slightly up, costs for services, special education, and transportation continue to rise significantly.

# Per-Pupil Spending — Where Does Ashland Stand?



Spending Comparison (FY24 Data)



State Ranking

362<sup>nd</sup>

Out of 396 Massachusetts Districts



Funding Gap

-\$5,243

Per Student vs. State Average



Ashland is doing **more with less** — but without structural correction, this gap will continue to widen.



## 127

Students Served In-District

### Benefits of In-District Programming

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- ✓ Allows students to remain in their community with peers.
- ✓ Maintains vital connections to local resources and families.
- ✓ Provides high-quality, specialized instruction at a fraction of out-of-district costs.



### COST AVOIDANCE

Estimated Annual Savings

# \$10.7 Million

By investing in our own programs, Ashland saves taxpayers millions annually compared to tuition and transportation for private out-of-district placements.



### Reduction Warning: SPED Coordinator (1.0 FTE)

Eliminating this position increases the caseload burden on remaining staff, creating significant risks for program coordination, IEP compliance, and service delivery quality.

# Grants Supporting APS Programs



Total Est. Funding

~\$323,231

Federal & State Entitlement Grants

## Primary Uses

- ✓ Targeted Staff Salaries
- ✓ Professional Development
- ✓ Curriculum Materials
- ✓ Student Support Services

## ☰ Federal Grants Utilized



### Title I

Improving Basic Programs



### Title II

Teacher Quality & Effectiveness



### Title III

English Language Acquisition



### Title IV

Student Support & Academic Enrichment

## ⚠ Critical Limitations

- **Variable & Not Guaranteed:** Funding amounts fluctuate year-to-year based on federal formulas and cannot be relied upon for fixed operational costs.
- **Supplement, Not Supplant:** Grants must add to existing programs and cannot be used to replace general fund obligations (like base teacher salaries).

# Summary — Two Paths Forward







## Option 1

### Override Budget (6.18%)

**\$47,236,865**

↑ \$2.75M Increase over FY26





-  **Structural Stability:** Creates a sustainable financial foundation.
-  **Athletics:** Fully funded within operating budget.
-  **School Choice:** Freed up for strategic capital needs.
-  **Long-Term:** Sustainable path with reduced future risk.

## Option 2

### 3.25% Budget (No Override)

**\$45,931,775**

↑ \$1.44M Increase over FY26

-  **Short-Term:** Maintains services briefly but ignores structural issues.
-  **Athletics:** \$300k structural deficit remains unresolved.
-  **School Choice:** Projected to be fully depleted by FY28.
-  **Risk:** High probability of deeper cuts in future cycles.



The School Committee is asked to consider both paths and vote on the FY27 budget recommendation.

## Immediate Priorities

-  **1 Approve 3.25% Budget Proposal at Public Meeting Along with Override**  
Secure reinstated positions and baseline funding.
-  **2 Authorize School Choice Funds**  
Approve usage for positions not covered by Town.
-  **3 Maintain Athletics Reduction**  
Keep \$300,000 offset as planned.
-  **4 Review & Monitor Staffing**  
Monitor enrollment and SPED needs for FY28.
-  **5 Initiate Override Conversation**  
Begin community dialogue for fiscal sustainability.

### **Fiscal Cliff Warning**

School Choice funds are projected to reach **negative balances** in FY28 under both scenarios.

*An override or structural change is critical to avoid a crisis.*

“

*Every position reinstated is a direct investment in our students — in their classrooms, their counseling, and their wellbeing. The path to sustainability runs through partnership.*



**James E. Adams**  
Superintendent