GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 16, 2026 @ 6:00 P.M.
CENTRAL OFFICE, ROOM 11/HYBRID

MEMBERS PRESENT: Beverly Washington – Chairperson, Adrian Johnson – Vice Chairperson, Andrea Ackerman (remote), Sean Corcoran (remote), Ian Thomas (remote), Jay Weitlauf (remote), Jennifer White (remote), Michael Whitney

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mitch Shinbrot

ALSO PRESENT: Susan Austin, Anne Marie Mancini (remote), Sam Kilpatrick, Shannon Weigle, Rebecca Beyus

I. CALL TO ORDER – Mrs. Beverly Washington, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

II. Review of the March 9, Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Johnson, Whitney: To approve the March 9, 2026, meeting minutes.
PASSED - UNANIMOUSLY

III. FOLLOW-UP OF THE ROBOTICS MANUFACTURING (DREAM) PLAN – Attachment #1

Susan Austin and Lori Ferguson gave an overview of the Robotics Manufacturing (DREAM) Plan. Ms. Austin noted that the district has received funding in the amount of $248,499.

A meeting was set for March 30, 2026, to continue discussion of the Robotics Manufacturing (DREAM) Plan.

IV. DISCUSSION RE: THE ELIMINATION OF CLASS RANK AT FITCH HIGH SCHOOL – Attachment #2

Mr. Matt Brown and Mrs. Amy McKenna gave an overview of the proposed Elimination of Class Rank at Fitch High School.

This item was referred to the Regular Board meeting on March 23, 2026, for action.

V. UPDATE RE: OPERATIONAL REVIEW

Rita Parciak gave an overview of the Operational Review.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE – Attachment #3

a. Communication Engagement re: the Budget - Rebecca Beyus gave an overview of Communication Engagement efforts regarding the FY27 budget and the Town Council's upcoming Public Hearing.

VII. REVIEW OF REFERRAL TRACKING SHEET

The Board reviewed the Referral Tracking Sheet:

- Curriculum/Instruction – ADD
  - R2026-37 Review of Manufacturing Factory/Robotics
- COW – Remove R2022-13 Discussion of Mentoring Program – How are we doing?
- COW – MOVE to Finance R2024-19 Create a monetary threshold for moving money within the budget for BOE approval regarding enterprise funds
- Put date and that it is ongoing to R2025-1 Discussion re: an Early Childhood Center

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ackerman, White: The meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

FITCH HIGH SCHOOL
Machine Program
Falcons R.I.S.E!

Our mission at Robert E. Fitch High School is to educate our young men and women to become outstanding citizens. The faculty and staff will collaborate with the home and community to promote academic excellence, physical wellness, and social awareness. We will encourage our students to use their individual talents to their fullest potential. To this end, our graduates will become informed, responsible adults who respect diversity and value life-long learning.

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DREAM
ROBOTICS, ENGINEERING, ARCHITECTURE, MANUFACTURING

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FROM THE NOVEMBER 10TH COW MEETING

1. What needs assessments were performed?
2. What is the total cost of the project?
3. What is the timeline for the implementation of the project?



WHAT NEEDS ASSESSMENTS WERE PERFORMED?

FACILITIES & SPACE

PROJECT PLANNING



FACILITIES & SPACE ASSESSMENT

A facilities and space assessment was conducted to confirm that adequate space and infrastructure are available to support the project, including the relocation of the Robotics Club to Fitch High School and potential expansion of connected coursework.

- ❑ Space
- ❑ Layout
- ❑ Infrastructure
- ❑ Safety and compliance
- ❑ Technology



FACILITIES & SPACE ASSESSMENT

GPS Machine Project		Status	Notes
Phase 1 Facilities Assessment	**DESCRIPTION**	**COMPLETE**	**Professionals consulted: EB TEAM: Cody Ouilette, Roland Parilla, David Besos, and Michael Letendre, EQUIP. REP: Andy Simpson, Coventry, RI Machine Instructor: Shawn Edge, Blueprint Consult: Tom Spadoni, Tech Director: Clint Kennedy, Facilities Director: Sam Kilpatrick**
Space & Layout			
	Equipment	☑	Layout in blueprint
	Storage of tools	☑	Tool crib in blueprint
	Raw materials	☑	Tool rack in blueprint
	Work benches	☑	Accounted for in blueprint.
	Classroom space	☑	Accounted for in blueprint.
Infrastructure & Utilities			
	Electrical capacity	☑	Updates made to the west wall for robotics equipment.
	3 phase power availability	☑	Sufficient
	Compressed air system feasibility	☑	System in place, but may need to be updated at some point.
	Ventilation	☑	Air conditioning system for machine operation
	Plumbing drainage needs	☑	Water available at working sink (6' x 2')
Safety & Compliance			
	Emergency stop systems and shut off valve for electric	☑	Existing and operational
	Eye wash, first aid kits, and fire extinguishers	☑	Existing and operational
	OSHA compliant	☑	OSHA compliant signage to be installed when equipment is installed.
	Local fire codes	☑	Local fire codes up to date. (FD walkthru)
Technology & Instructional Supports			
	Internet connectivity capacity	☑	Connectivity capability is sufficient
Additional Considerations			
	Flex space	☑	Discussion with Steering Committee about existing and future spaces (Integration of robotics, adult training, etc.)
	Future expansion	☑	Considerations for incorporating addt'l space such as woodshop, computer lab for expanded DREAM utilization
Deliverable	Facilities and equipment readiness assessment and cost estimate	☑	An estimate of the project was completed for program implementation

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PROJECT PLANNING ASSESSMENT

A project assessment was completed to determine the program's budget requirements and overall resource needs.

- ❑ Equipment
- ❑ Tooling
- ❑ Storage
- ❑ Utilities
- ❑ Funding
- ❑ Instructional technology



PROJECT PLANNING ASSESSMENT

GPS Machine Project		Status
Item Assessed	**DESCRIPTION**	**COMPLETE**
Equipment	The steering committee was guided by machine professionals regarding equipment needs: EB mfg. team, equipment rep, machine instructor.	☑
Tooling	The steering committee was guided by machine professionals regarding tooling needs: EB mfg. team, equipment rep, machine instructor.	☑
Storage	Utilized CAD software to complete a space layout for placement of equipment, tools, raw materials, storage and work stations.	☑
Utilities	Adhering to guidance from the EB, equipment specifications, and facilities personnel, a review and update of the electrical utilities was completed.	☑
Funding	Identified funding sources for the project. See Budget Sheet.	☑
Instructional Technology	Received approval from the technology director for sufficiency of internet connectivity for CAD/CAM workspaces and CNC software.	☑

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WHAT IS THE TOTAL COST OF THE PROJECT?

BUDGET



PROJECT BUDGET

CATEGORY	SOURCE	AMOUNT	TOTALS
EQUIPMENT			$327,249.00
	Electric Boat	$248,499.00	
	Perkins Secondary	$32,370.00	
	Perkins Supplemental	$46,380.00	
TOOLS, ACCESSORIES, AND TECHNOLOGY			$50,835.00
	DoDEA	$41,085.00	
	Perkins	$9,750.00	
FACILITY PREPARATION			$100,000.00
	CIP	$100,000.00	
TOTAL			$478,084.00

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT?

TIMELINE



PROJECT TIMELINE AND COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

DREAM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	SY 2025-2026	SY 2026-2027	SY 2027-2028
Utilization of the space for Robotics	November		
Tooling, supplies, and materials	February-March		
Classroom furniture & fixtures ordered	February-March		
Equipment procurement	March		
Teacher postings for Robotics & Prec. Machine Tech	March		
Classroom furniture & fixtures installed	May-June		
Equipment installation	May-June		
Machine teacher training sponsored by EB	June-July		
Robotics 1 (Semester)		Sem 1 & Sem 2	Sem 1 & Sem 2
Intro to Precision Machine Technology (Semester)		Sem 1 & Sem 2	Sem 1 & Sem 2
Robotics 2 (Semester)		Sem 1 & Sem 2	Sem 1 & Sem 2
Precision Machining & CNC Technology 2 (Full Year)			August
Advanced Robotics 1 (Semester)			August
Advanced Robotics 2 (Semester)			
Advanced Precision Machine & CNC Technology (Full Year)			
Advanced Machine Co Op (Full Year)			

THANK YOU

DREAM STEERING COMMITTEE

Susan Austin, Superintendent
Willie Barber, GDEB
Peter Bass, Groton Middle School Principal
Matt Brown, Fitch High School Principal
Chelsey Courtright, CTE Pathways
Lori Ferguson, LF Consulting, LLC
Clint Kennedy, Director of Technology
Sam Kilpatrick, Facilities Director
Anne Marie Mancini, Asst. Superintendent
Melissa Manzione, CTE Dept. Head
Ben Moon K-5 STEM Coordinator
Sean McKeown, CT Dept. of Education
Val Nelson, DoDEA Project Director
Susan Votto, LF Consulting, LLC
Shannon Weigle, Grants Coordinator
Bryce Aaronson, Program Manager, Navy STEM Coalition (UCONN/URI)
Dr. Lexi Hain, Director UCONN Navy STEM Program

Proposal to Stop Publishing/Making Class Rank Public
Fitch's Reasoning to Remove From Transcript



Proposal

Class rank, considered for admission by some colleges (only 18% according to one recent study), is based on all grades. It is computed at the end of each semester for students. Class Rank is determined officially at the end of semester 1 of their senior year.

Starting with the class of 2030, FHS proposes to no longer publish class rank at the end of each semester.

After the seventh semester of high school, the school counseling department and administration will announce the valedictorian and salutatorian for the graduating class.

RATIONALE FOR REMOVAL

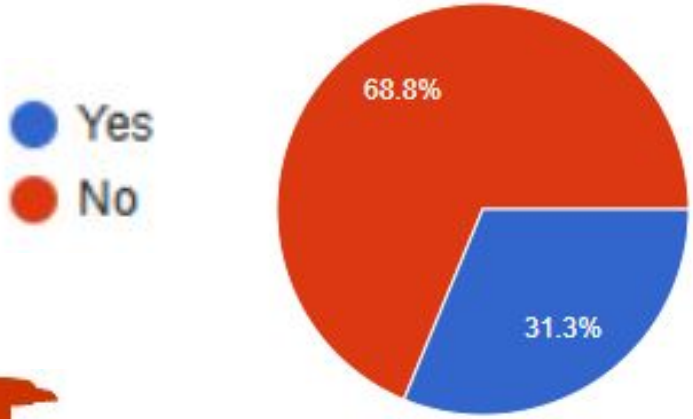


Class Rank Discussion with ECC Principals



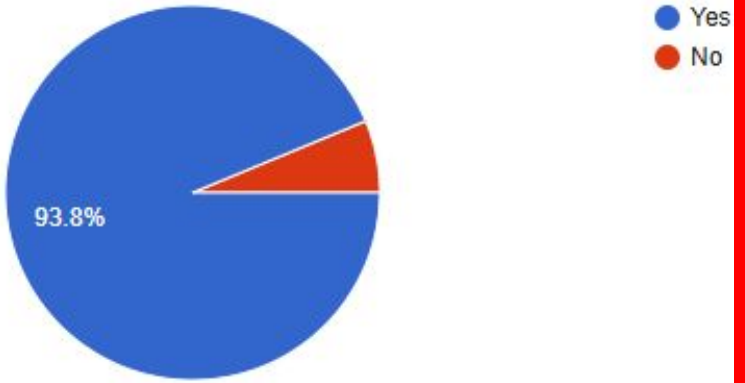
Do you still publish class rank?

16 responses



Do you use class rank to determine Valedictorian and Salutatorian?

16 responses



Open Ended Responses

ECC Principal's Input Regarding Class Rank:

- We don't use a Val/Sal model. We have _____ Scholars, who are selected based on class rank, AP courses, standardized test scores, etc. So, I said "yes" to that question, but it's not quite as straightforward.
- Even without class rank, students track their gpa down to the hundredth of a point. I would be concerned about the added pressure of communicating class rank. It's also my understanding that colleges put very little weight into rank given the variation in how this is calculated from school to school.
- We compute class rank, but only share which students are Valedictorian and Salutatorian.

"Students fixate on competing with other students and it drives students and parents to levels of stress and competition that are not in the best interest of students"

Open Ended Responses

ECC Principal's Input Regarding Class Rank:

- We obviously have to keep it for scholarship/book award purposes too, but we do not post it or report it out and we removed it from transcripts years ago. If students come to our counselors and asks if their rank qualifies them for any scholarships, they privately share whether they do or don't.
- We do have a form that students can fill out if they would like the rank reported to their schools. The default practice is not to report, but there are some circumstances that sharing this data is beneficial to the student and their candidacy.
- We only recognize Val and Sal - stopped publishing top 10 several years ago.
- We are in the process of going to the BOE to remove published class rank. We are still keeping Val/Sal for UConn scholarship opportunities.
- We only publish the top 10.

Open Ended Responses

ECC Principal's Input Regarding Class Rank:

- Not that this alleviated all parent and student concerns when we made this decision but...in a big school, someone who is ranked 50th in their class might be just as accomplished a student as someone who is ranked in the top 10 in a smaller school. What does rank really mean?? It's such a localized measure--just like what does a grade of an A really mean? I think the strongest arguments would come from college admissions staff. I don't think that they value it very highly for the reasons given but it might be worth getting a quote from UConn, for example.

Link to Scholarship Opportunities at UConn

GROTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

P.O. Box K, Groton, Connecticut 06340

1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, Connecticut 06355

PHONE (860) 572-2100 • FAX (860) 572-2107

Groton Public Schools FY27 Budget and Town Public Hearing

March 12, 2026

Dear Groton Public Schools Families,

We are pleased to share that the Groton Board of Education has approved the FY27 District Budget for the next school year, which has now been submitted to the Town Manager and will move forward to the Town Council, then the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) for review and approval. This milestone reflects months of thoughtful collaboration and careful analysis between the Board of Education, Superintendent, District Administration, and School Principals.

The Groton Public Schools budget reflects an unwavering commitment to supporting student success while maintaining fiscal responsibility to our community. It maintains reasonable class sizes, sustains academic and extracurricular programs, supports our dedicated staff, and continues essential investments in technology and infrastructure that benefit our students and schools.

The community also plays an important role in the budget process and is invited to a Town Council public hearing on **Wednesday, March 25, at 6:00 pm at the Thrive55+ Active Living Center.** We want to ensure families across our district are aware of this opportunity to attend and share your perspective on the experiences that make a difference to you and your students. Both parents and students are invited to attend and share their voice.

The full budget, as well as other information on district priorities for the coming year, is available on our website at **www.grotonschools.org/budget**. Highlights are also outlined in the attached Budget-at-a-Glance handout.

I look forward to seeing many of you from across our community on March 25. We appreciate the ongoing partnership of our families and community as we work together to support Groton students.

Sincerely,

Beverly Washington

Chairperson, Groton Board of Education

Susan L. Austin

Superintendent of Schools

Groton Public Schools

Exploring the Proposed Budget

Groton Public Schools FY27 proposed budget reflects a commitment to supporting student success while maintaining fiscal responsibility to our community. It maintains reasonable class sizes, sustains academic and extracurricular programs, supports our dedicated staff, and continues essential investments in technology and infrastructure that benefit our students and schools.

Susan L. Austin
Superintendent

Anne Marie Mancini, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent

Board of Education

Beverly Washington, Chairperson
Adrian Johnson, Vice Chairperson/Secretary
Andrea Ackerman, Ed.D.
Sean Corcoran
Mitch Shinbrot
Ian Thomas
Jay Weitlauf
Jennifer White
Mike Whitney, Ph.D.

Budget Priorities

- **Strong Academic Programs** – Strengthen literacy and mathematics instruction while maintaining high-quality academic programs across all schools.
- **Advanced Learning Opportunities** – Expand access to the International Baccalaureate world programs (DP, CP, MYP) and Advanced Placement and Early College Experience courses.
- **Career Pathways** – Strengthen STEAM and Career Pathway programs in robotics, engineering, and manufacturing with partners including General Dynamics Electric Boat, the Navy, and Eastern Workforce Investment Board.
- **Extracurricular & Athletic Opportunities** – Continue offering a wide range of clubs, activities, and athletic programs that support student engagement and attendance.
- **School Choice & Community Partnerships** – Support elementary magnet schools and partnerships that provide families with both neighborhood school options and school choice.
- **Early Childhood Investment** – Advance plans for an Early Childhood Center at the Mary Morrisson site with expanded full-day PreK programs.
- **Student Support & Well-Being** – Provide Special Education services through age 22 and strengthen social-emotional and mental health supports for students.
- **Safe, Modern Learning Environments** – Continue investments in classroom technology and maintain strong school safety with School Resource Officers and security personnel.



About Our Students



FY27 Projected Enrollment

4,338 = 5% Increase

47% Free/Reduced Lunch
53% Racial Minority
4% ELL
21% Special Education
20% Military Connected

October 1, 2025 Data

Did You Know?

As a military commmunity, GPS typically registers 800 new students each year. Roughly 25% of our student population transitions in or out of our schools each year.

SAVE THE DATES!

March 25

Budget Public Hearing and Superintendent's Presentation

Wednesday, March 25 at 6:00 PM
Thrive 55+ Active Living Center

March 31

Budget Discussion with the Town Council

Tuesday, March 31 at 6:00 PM
Thrive 55+ Active Living Center

Connect with us

www.grotonschools.org/budget

@grotonschools

@grotonpublicschools

FY27 Budget-at-a-Glance

The FY27 budget supports high-quality teaching and learning while balancing the needs of students with our fiscal responsibility to Groton taxpayers. Increases are primarily driven by contractual obligations, transportation, tuition, special education costs, and unfunded state mandates.

Proposed FY27 Budget
$97,825,941

=

6.33% Increase

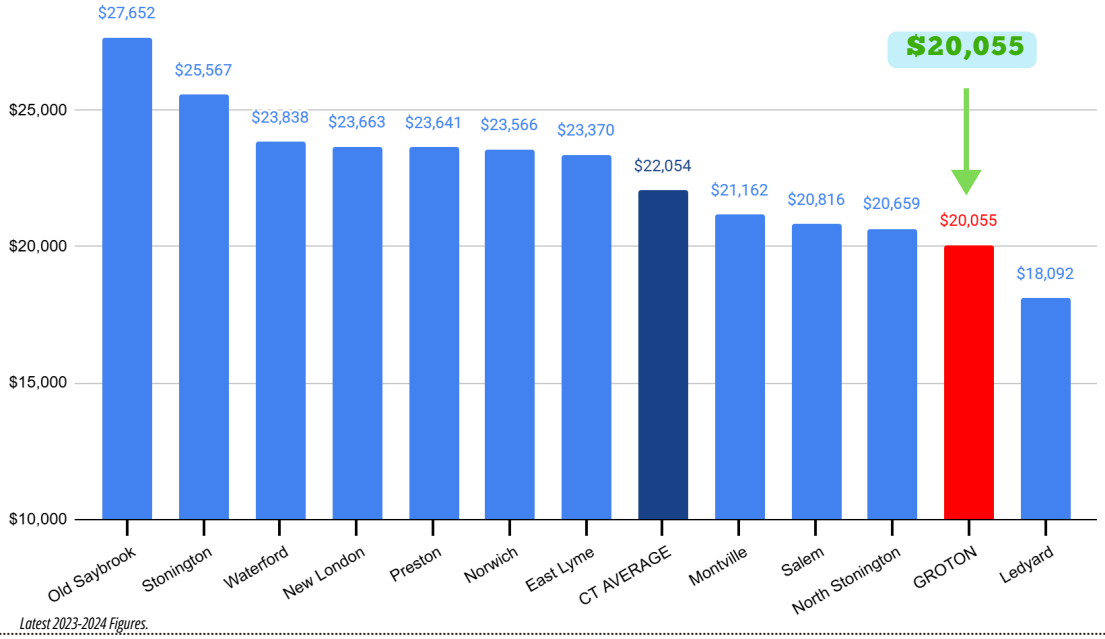
8-Year Average Increase
2018 - 2026
2.37%

Increase Drivers

- Health Insurance
- Special Education
- Student Transportation
- Staff Salaries
- Unfunded Mandates

Spending per student: How does Groton compare?

Groton Public Schools spends less per student than the state average and many nearby districts while continuing to provide high-quality programs and enriching opportunities that support student success.



Latest 2023-2024 Figures.

75% of the districts budget is salary, benefits, and contractual obligations



Strong schools depend on strong educators.

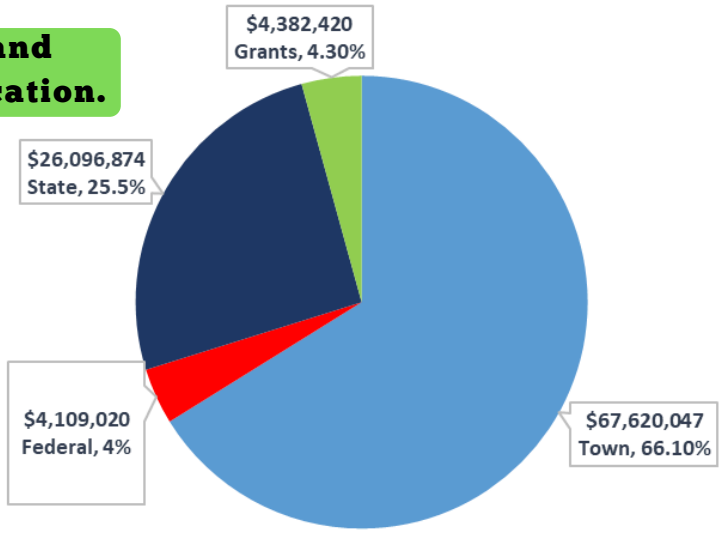
Our team of highly qualified educators and staff are the foundation of every opportunity we provide our students.

They educate, guide, support, and inspire our students every day. They build strong relationships, create safe and engaging classrooms, and help students grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

Federal and State grants are the missing piece and provide funds to our town for our students' education.

Family participation in the annual Impact Aid survey helps the Town of Groton receive funds for education to support technology, educator training and coaching, and curriculum resources that strengthen instruction in literacy, math, science, STEM, world language, and Career Pathways. The district also actively pursues grant funding to support programs that enrich our students' educational experience.





Note: Less than 1% of the budget (approximately $20,000) comes from miscellaneous revenue sources.

FY27 Proposed Budget

Groton Public Schools FY27 proposed budget reflects a commitment to supporting student success while maintaining fiscal responsibility to our community. It maintains reasonable class sizes, sustains academic and extracurricular programs, supports our dedicated staff, and continues essential investments in technology and infrastructure that benefit our students and schools.

Budget Snapshots



SAVE THE DATE: PUBLIC HEARING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026

The community plays an important role in the budget process and has a voice. The Town Council will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, March 25, at 6:00 PM at the Thrive 55+ Community Center. We want to ensure families across our district are aware of this opportunity to attend and share your perspective on the experiences that make a difference to you and your students.