



Updated: March 23, 2026

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We have received questions from community members seeking additional information about the district budget, negotiations, and calendar, calling for more transparency. While proposals exchanged during mediation remain confidential between the parties, we would like to share some facts that may increase understanding.

To help keep our community informed, we have developed this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that will be periodically updated.

Background Information

Q1: Are Okemos Public Schools teachers working without a contract? Are teachers getting paid?

A: The 2024-25 Okemos Education Association (OEA) contracts expired June 30, 2025. As required by law, Okemos Public Schools (OPS) continues to honor the expired contract while negotiating with the OEA. OEA members continue to be paid wages and receive the same benefits during an expired contract.

Q2: Did OEA members receive a pay increase for the 2025-26 school year?

A: Teachers who were eligible for a “step” on the salary scale received that increase at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year, despite the contract’s expiration. Approximately 70% of OEA members received step increases.

The 2025-26 step increase for eligible OEA members amounted to approximately \$723,300. For each eligible teacher, the average step increase is approximately \$2,576 or a 3.9% salary increase.

Q3: Does the OEA have a competitive salary scale?

A: As part of the negotiation process, both the OPS and OEA use school districts within the region with similar student enrollment and demographics as data points for comparison as a

part of the negotiation process. OPS remains committed to maintaining a competitive salary schedule for OEA members.

Q4: Have other OPS employee groups received wage increases?

A: The board ratified the transportation employees' contract in August 2025, which included wage increases. All eligible employees received a "step increase" at the beginning of the school year. Other employee groups continue to bargain compensation but have not received wage increases. As of March 16th, directors, coordinators, principals, and other employees who are not part of a bargaining unit have not received a wage increase. The Superintendent elected to decline a contractual step advancement. The district will provide updates as contracts are settled.

District Budget

Q5: When was the state budget for the 2025-26 school year finalized?

A: The state legislature missed the legally required July 1 deadline to finalize the state aid budget. The district developed a 2025-26 budget based on revenue assumptions. The state approved the school aid budget in October, three months after the start of the district's new fiscal year.

Q6: I heard that schools got record per-pupil funding from the State. Why doesn't Okemos have more money in the budget for salary increases?

A: For the 2024-25 and the 2025-26 school years, State and local funding did not provide adequate revenue to meet the district's expenditures and increased costs.

In the 2024-25 school year, the state did not provide a structural (repeating) increase to per-pupil funding. Rather, the State provided revenue to offset retirement expenses of \$1.9 million, equivalent to \$406/pupil, with promises to continue the offset in retirement costs in 2025-26. Those recurring reductions did not occur and the State provided another one-time retirement revenue stream of \$634,000, which expires in 2026-27.

The Legislature's one time revenue sources make it difficult to fund recurring salary increases for our employees.

Q7: What other fiscal challenges has the district encountered that has significantly impacted the budget?

A: For the 25-26 and 26-27 school years, Okemos will experience a significant reduction in recurring special education funding as the result of a restructure of the Ingham ISD's funding

formula; the district has a legal obligation to continue providing special education services with lost funding coming from our general fund.

Q8: How does instructional spending and revenue at OPS compare with other area districts?

A: OPS ranks high among traditional school districts in Ingham County for spending on instructional programming per pupil, according to the Michigan Department of Education's [1014 Bulletin](#) published in February 2026. Conversely, OPS receives significantly less local, state, and federal revenue per pupil than other Ingham County school districts.

Q9: What budget cuts did the district make in the last budget cycle?

A: The district reduced general fund expenditures by \$1.1 million in the 2025-26 budget by implementing several district-level reductions that did not significantly impact instruction or result in employee layoffs.

Q10: In November 2022, the community approved \$275 million in bond funding. What can the money be used for?

A: The district is legally restricted in how bond funding can be used. Operational expenditures, such as wages, are an unlawful use of bond proceeds

Q11: How can I learn more about the 2026-27 budget process?

A: We welcome you to join us for our board meetings where budget updates are presented regularly. You can join us in person or watch the [board meetings online](#). Meeting materials, including past budget presentations, can be found online on our [BoardBook page](#). Meetings are also recorded for you to view at your convenience on our district's [You Tube channel](#). A financial [presentation](#) providing an overview of impacts to the district budget over the last few years is also available.

Calendar

Q12: Why don't we have a published calendar for the 2026-27 school year yet?

A: The school calendar is negotiated between OPS and the OEA. The OPS has invited the OEA to negotiate the calendar and looks forward to those discussions.

Q13: When can we expect to know the first date of school and dates for winter and spring breaks for planning purposes?

A: The start date for the 2026-27 school year will be Wednesday, August 26, 2026 (Half day K-12). Winter break is Monday, December 21, 2026 - Friday, January 1, 2027, and spring break is Monday, March 29 - Friday, April 2, 2027 (as [published on our website](#)) as part of the Ingham ISD common calendar. We will continue to negotiate the remainder of the school calendar with the OEA and provide updates as soon as we can.

Negotiation Update

Q14: What is the current status of negotiations with the OEA?

A: The parties are currently utilizing the services of a State-appointed mediator to assist with reaching a compromise in negotiations. The State-appointed mediator helps both parties work through and discuss the outstanding issues. The board is hopeful that the work of both parties will result in an amicable agreement that recognizes the hard work done by teachers and professional staff while ensuring the district's financial stability. Discussions that take place during mediation are not binding and proposals exchanged are confidential.

Q15: What did the OEA propose for teacher wages and what is the impact on the district's budget?

A: The OEA presented its first financial proposal on December 2, 2025. The OEA's proposal before mediation would cost the district approximately \$12.4 million over three years, resulting in the district having to exhaust and overspend its "rainy day fund" (fund balance) of \$9.2 million. (See chart below.)

A healthy fund balance is important for the financial stability of the district. Exhausting the fund balance limits the district's ability to pay for potential unexpected expenses and could trigger state oversight of district finances. It is not fiscally responsible to spend down a fund balance below 5% and is not a sustainable approach to pay for large recurring costs from our fund balance.

**Fund Balance Projection
with 1/14/26 OEA Proposal**

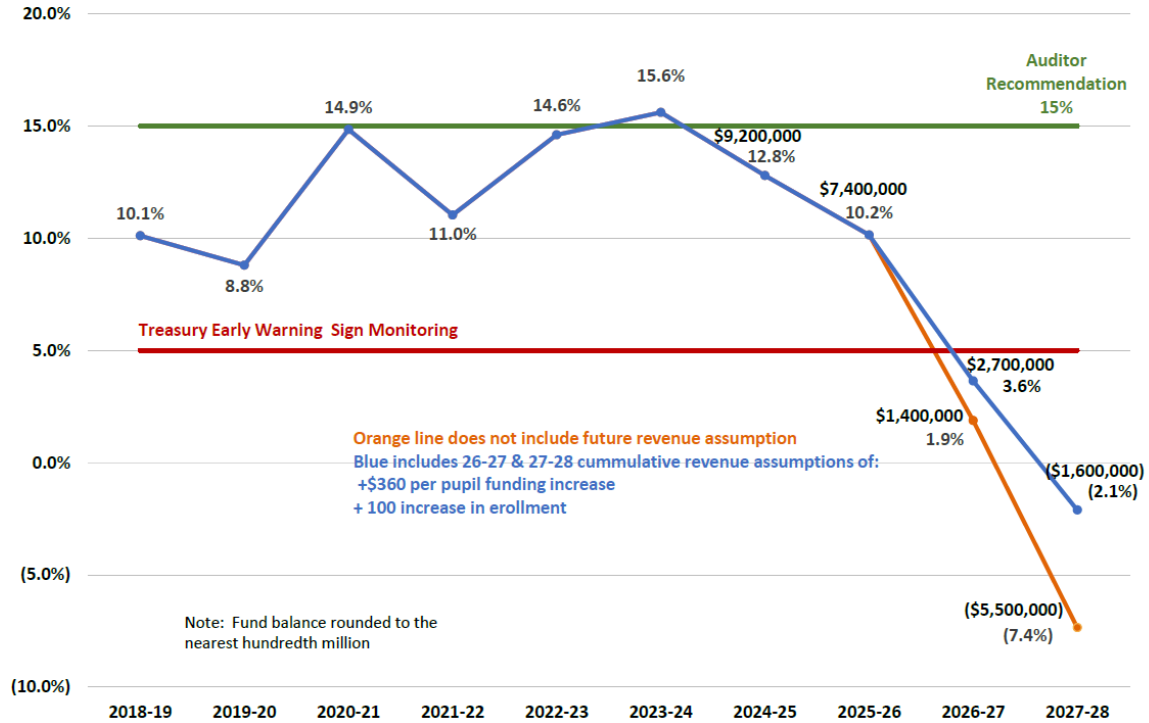


Chart: Data as of 1/14/26 OEA proposal

Q16: What did OPS propose for teacher wages and what is the impact on the district's budget?

A: OPS provided its first financial proposal on December 10, 2025. OPS's proposal before mediation would cost the district an estimated \$3.2 million but would not result in the district exhausting or overspending its "rainy day fund" (fund balance) of \$9.2 million dollars. (See chart below.)

A healthy fund balance is important for the financial stability of the district. Having a fund balance allows the district to pay for potential unexpected expenses and respond to unforeseen needs. The OPS proposal allows for wage increases and does not spend down a fund balance below 5%; it is a more sustainable and responsible financial approach for the district.

**Fund Balance Projection
with 1/14/26 Board Proposal**

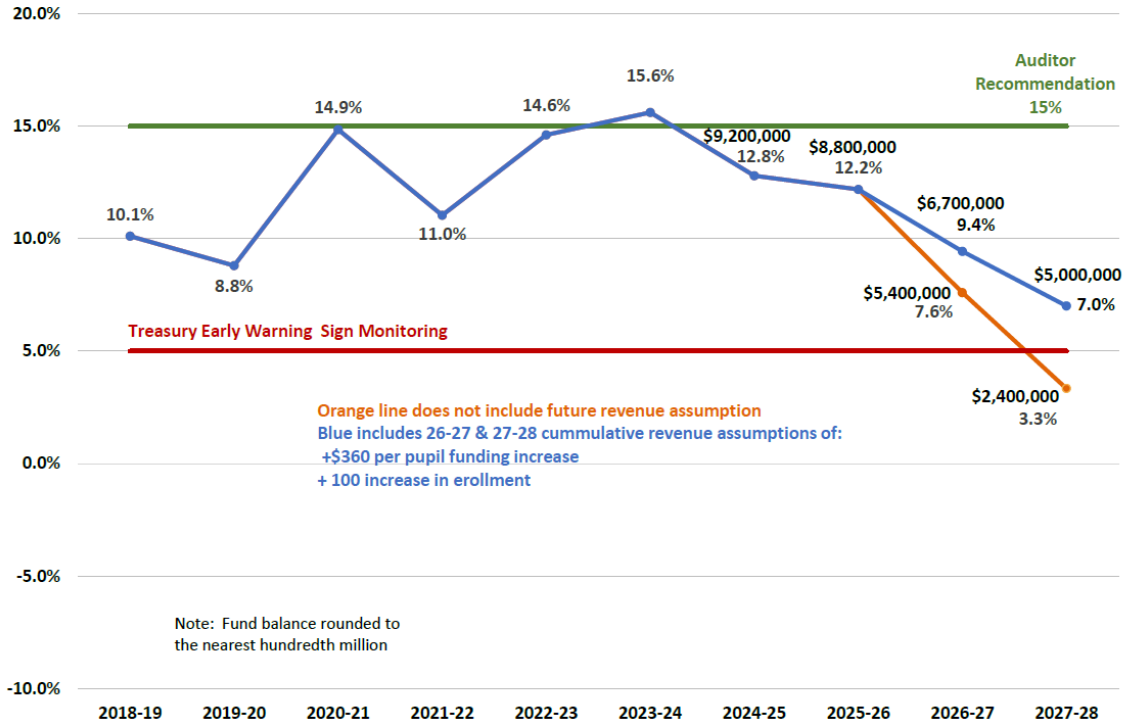


Chart: Data as of 1/14/26 Board proposal

Q17: Why are you sharing proposals from January with the community?

A: Proposals in mediation cannot be shared by either party. The board is sharing the last proposals from the OEA and the board prior to mediation with the community for transparency.

Q18: How many times have the bargaining representatives from the OEA and OPS met for negotiations?

A: As of March 16, the two groups have met to bargain 23 times beginning in April 2025. As required by law, OPS continues to honor the expired contract while negotiating the successor contact.