

Board of Education – Budget Workshop – March 18, 2026

POMPERAUG REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 15

The mission of Region 15, a collaborative community committed to excellence, is to educate every student to be productive, ethical, and engaged in a global society through proven and innovative learning experiences supported by its strong community whose decision-making is based on the best interest of all students.

Mission Statement, Adopted 9 December 2002; Updated 2009

Board of Education – Budget Workshop

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

6:30 P.M.

Pomperaug High School Media Center

PRESENT: Ms. Sharon Attick (absent)
Ms. Shannon Cavallo (absent)
Ms. Heather Dwyer
Mr. John Jenusaitis (absent)
Ms. Marion Manzo, Chairperson

Mr. Tom Marks
Mr. Jeff Olsen
Mrs. Heather Rodgers (remote)
Dr. Sally Romano
Mr. Steve Suriani (arrived 6:57 p.m.)

PRESENT: Mr. Joshua Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carrie Chiappetta, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Joe Martino, Director of Finance
Dr. Jessica Sciarretto, Director of Student Services

Ms. Manzo called the March 18, 2026 Budget Workshop Meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Call to Order
Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Marks motioned to amend the agenda to move the Capital Plan discussion before Pupil Services, Dr. Romano seconded. A vote was made and passed with Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Manzo, Mr. Marks, Mr. Olsen, Mrs. Rodgers and Dr. Romano voting, "aye". Ms. Attick, Ms. Cavallo, Mr. Jenusaitis and Mr. Suriani were absent.

Motion to amend the agenda

Mr. Martino presented the 2026-2027 Capital Plan for Region 15. The proposed Capital Plan totals \$575,000 and remains within the approved budget. The plan prioritizes maintenance, efficiency upgrades, safety improvements and regulatory compliance. Mr. Martino is very cognizant of managing costs and extending the life of existing facilities.

Capital Plan (Attachment 1)

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Dr. Sciarretto presented the 2026-2027 Pupil Services budget (Attachment 2). The main budget drivers are out of district tuition and transportation. Tuition rates increased 5-7% and transportation costs rose 7%. Dr. Sciarretto emphasized that there are fewer students placed out of district, but the costs have increased significantly. Another cost pressure is students are now eligible to stay in the program until they are 22 years old. Board members asked Dr. Sciarretto questions and engaged in discussion.

Pupil Services (Attachment 2)

The board reviewed a working revenue document focused on athletics, particularly pay-to-play and gate fees. Board members held a discussion about possible adjustments, as well as proposed \$50,000 increase to the athletic budget to potentially offset some fees. Some board members want to stay in line with other districts and avoid being the outlier. Board members voiced concerns regarding equity across sports. Board members recognize the frustration from parents with gate fee inefficiencies and the ticketing system (GoFan). Board members suggested to improve access and communication. Board members did agree there should be a distinct difference in fees between middle school and high school sports due to the difference in experience and cost to run. The discussion ended with consensus around a revenue-neutral adjustment, while acknowledging that several board members were absent from the discussion.

Revenue

Ms. Manzo commented that budget workshops have concluded and will defer a formal “pulse check” until the March 23rd meeting. Ms. Manzo asked board members to submit any outstanding questions to the Superintendent or Mr. Martino prior to the March 23rd meeting.

Budget Discussion

Mr. Marks requested for a “post analysis” for the 2024-2025 surplus to better understand contributing factors and to improve future budgeting. Superintendent Smith noted the key drivers for the “surplus” were higher than expected state excess cost funding, conservative budgeting/ held funds, staffing “hedging” (unfilled positions), variability in special education tuition, one-time allocations to capital and summer projects. It was noted that many factors are not recurring in the current budget.

Mr. Suriani reflected his concern over the proposed budget increase exceeding 5%. He would like to see a proposal that is under 5%.

Ms. Manzo announced future meeting dates:

- a. Monday, March 23, 2026 Public Hearing regarding Building Project GES PES, Pomperaug High School Media Center, 6:30 p.m.

Announcement of Future Meetings

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- b. Monday, March 23, Regular Meeting of the Board of Education, Pomperaug High School Media Center, 7:30 p.m. (Budget Discussion)
- c. Wednesday, March 25, 2026 Budget Workshop with Boards of Finance from Middlebury and Southbury, 6:30 p.m.
- d. Wednesday, March 25, 2026, Public Hearing for the 2026-2027 Region 15 Proposed Superintendent's Budget
- e. Monday, April 6, 2026 Policy & Curriculum Committee Meeting, Pomperaug High School Media Center, 6:00 p.m.
- f. Monday, April 6, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Board of Education, Pomperaug High School Media Center, 7:30 p.m. (Adopt Budget)

Upon a motion by Mrs. Rodgers, seconded Mr. Suriani
IT WAS VOTED

“to adjourn the March 18, 2026 Budget Workshop meeting at 8:53 p.m.” and passed with Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Manzo, Mr. Marks, Mr. Olsen, Mrs. Rodgers, Dr. Romano and Mr. Suriani voting “aye”. Ms. Attick, Ms. Cavallo and Mr. Jenusaitis were absent.

Adjourn

OPERATING CAPITAL PLAN 2026-27

3/18/2026

Attachment I



POMPERAUG HIGH SCHOOL

				Project Cost
Locker Bay Remodel and Abatement				\$ 43,000.00
Classroom Wall Divider Replacement				\$ 38,000.00
HVAC unit 2nd floor Math/English				\$ 60,000.00
Boiler upgrades/heat exchanger				\$ 100,000.00
CT DEEP required Ground water plan				\$ 15,000.00
Totals				<u>\$ 256,000.00</u>





MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

					Project Cost	
Roof Design and Bidding Costs					\$ 65,000.00	
CT DEEP required Ground water plan					\$ 15,000.00	
					\$ 80,000.00	



MIDDLEBURY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

	Project Cost		
Main Entrance Flooring	\$ 9,000.00		
PA System Upgrade	\$ 15,000.00		
10-15 Windows Replaced	\$ 25,000.00		
Total	\$ 49,000.00		



GAINFIELD AND POMPERAUG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- The Operation Budget will continue to support each school as needed.





TOTAL OF PROJECTS

			General Fund	
Pomperaug High School			\$ 256,000.00	
Rochambeau Middle School			\$ 92,000.00	
Memorial Middle School			\$ 80,000.00	
Middlebury Elementary School			\$ 49,000.00	
Long Meadow Elementary School			\$ 60,000.00	
Central Office			\$ 38,000.00	
			<u>\$ 575,000.00</u>	



DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT SERVICES

DR. JESSICA SCIARRETTO
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES
MARCH 18, 2026

Attachment 2

WHAT IS IDEA?

At its core, IDEA is a federal law that ensures children with disabilities have the same access to public education as their peers. It governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services.

For a Board of Education, IDEA represents three things:

- **A Legal Mandate:** Non-compliance carries significant litigation and fiscal risks.
- **A Funding Mechanism:** It provides federal oversight and some supplemental funding (though rarely "fully funded").
- **A Civil Rights Commitment:** It guarantees that "disability is a natural part of the human experience" and does not diminish the right to participate in education.



THE "BOARD-LEVEL" IMPACT

Fiscal Responsibility

Special education is often one of the largest line items in a budget. IDEA requires **Maintenance of Effort (MOE)**, meaning the district generally cannot reduce its support for special education from year to year. Understanding IDEA helps the Board anticipate costs for out-of-district placements, specialized equipment, and staffing.

Risk Management

The "Procedural Safeguards" are where most legal challenges arise. If the district fails to follow IDEA, it can lead to "Due Process" hearings, which are costly and adversarial. A Board that supports robust IDEA training for staff actually saves the district money in the long run by avoiding litigation.

Student Outcomes

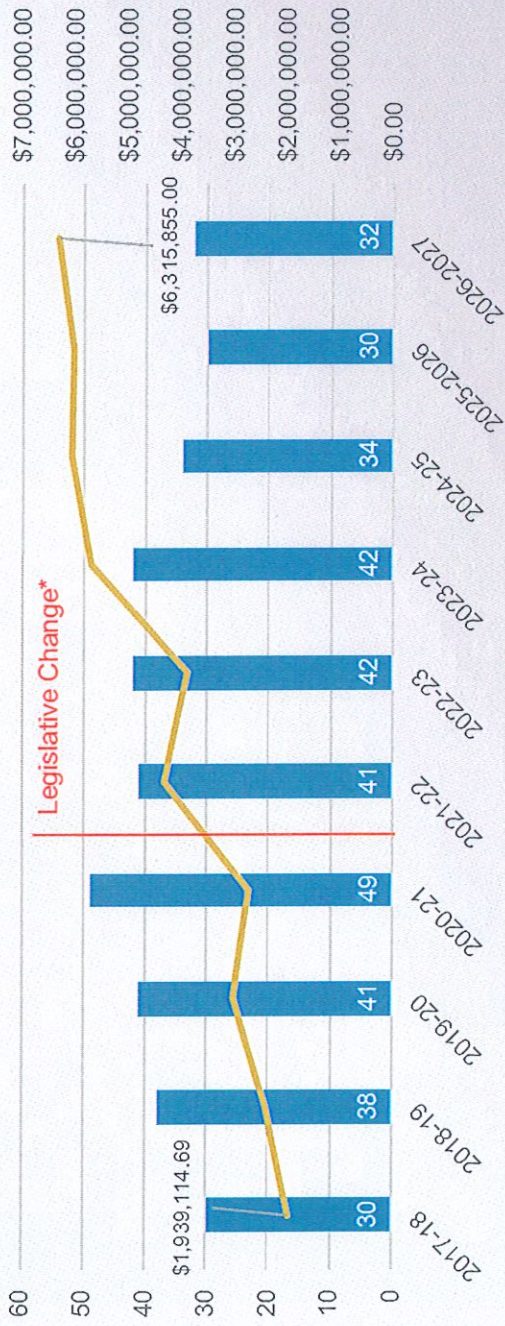
Ultimately, the Board's job is to ensure all students graduate ready for "further education, employment, and independent living." IDEA provides the tools—like **Transition Services** (starting at age 14, or younger in some states)—to ensure students with disabilities don't fall through the cracks.



BUDGET DRIVERS

	Current 2025-2026	Proposed 2026-2027	Difference
Tuition	\$6,014,141.00	\$6,315,855.00	+\$301,714.00
Transportation	\$2,527,983.00	\$2,758,887.00	+\$230,904.00

Out of District Tuition



*The legislative change in 2020 increased the exit age from 21 to the end of the school year a student turns 22.

Number of Students Budgeted Tuition

Excess Cost

- + The initial threshold for which a student is eligible for the Excess Cost grant is referred to as the "Basic Contribution or per pupil expenditure". For LEA placements or students educated within the district the threshold is equal to the prior year's Net Current Expenditures per Pupil (NCEP) x 4.5. For placements initiated by a state agency, e.g., the Department of Children and Families, the threshold is equal to the prior year's NCEP x 1.

Student A:

Cost of tuition & other costs = \$186,456.60

- $4.5 \text{ (rate)} \times \text{NCEP } (\$24,837.72) = \$111,769.74$
- $\$186,456.60 - \$111,769.74 = \$74,686.86$
- 70% of $\$74,686.86 = \$52,280.80$ which is excess cost.
- A district might expect to get back $\$52,280.80$ for this individual for the 2025-2026 school year.

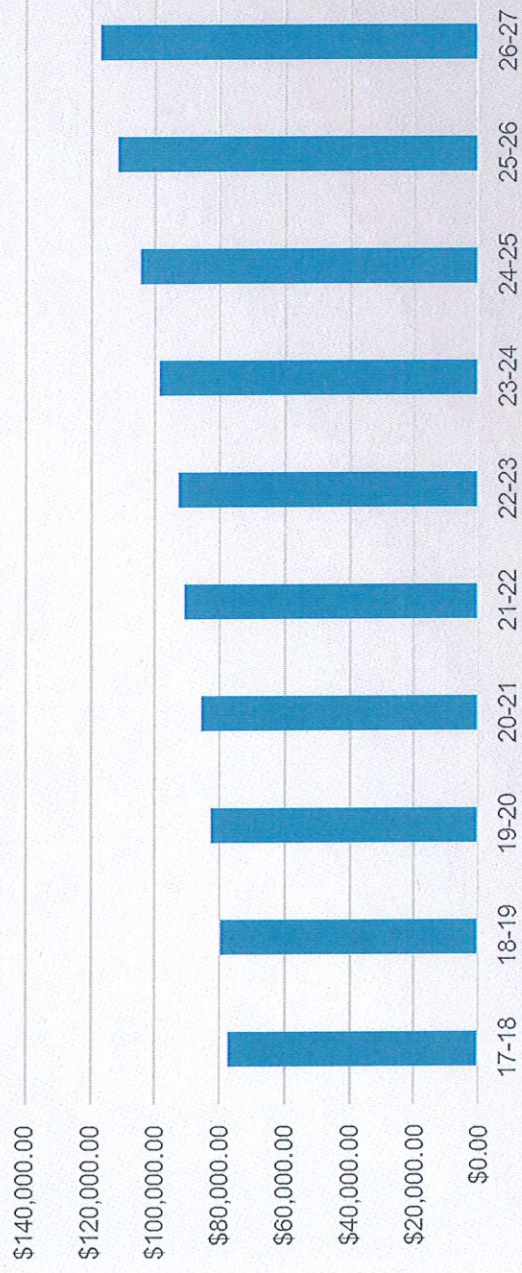
Total Actual District Cost: \$134,175.80

Excess Cost Reimbursement

The money that is reimbursed is represented in the revenue line of the total budget. It is not shown in the special education tuition.

The Threshold is what the district must pay first for a student's program and only the costs above that are eligible for reimbursement.

Threshold Amount



KEY FACTORS IMPACTING THE 2026 STUDENT SERVICES BUDGET

Increasing student needs and service intensity

Rising tuition rates at specialized programs

Transportation costs have increased by 7%

Property cost is up by \$20,860 due to durable medical equipment needs

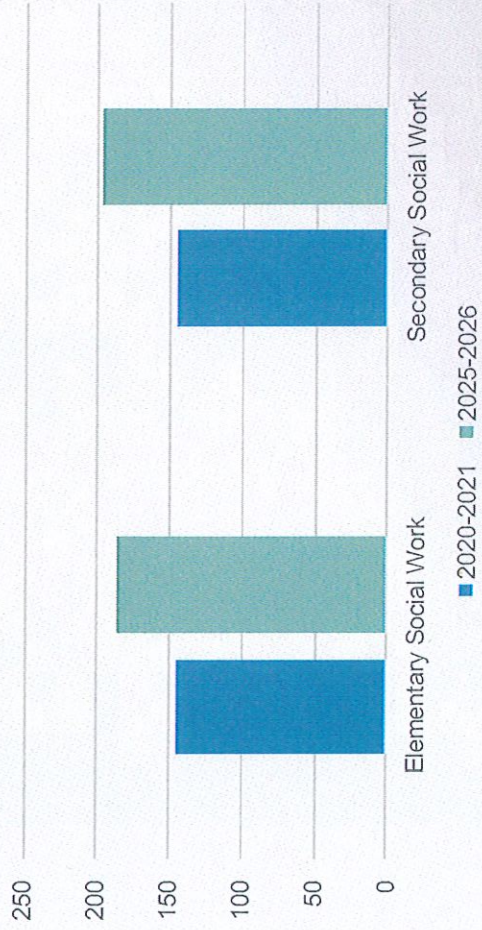


SOCIAL WORK

+	Provide/Educate Families on Mental Health Resources	+	School Avoidance Support
+	Provide/Educate Families on Community Resources accessible to all families	+	Region 15 Preschool Screenings
+	Provide/Educate Families and State-Level Resources	+	MJJ Alternative Ed Program
+	Ongoing Case Management - Student Specific	+	CBITS/Bounce Back Trauma Groups
+	Evaluate/Support Crisis Services and Follow-Up Resources	+	McKinney-Vento Homeless Support
+	Connecting to/Collaborating with Community Providers		Strengthening Relationships with Community Providers through Networking/Trainings
+	School Attendance Team Meetings	+	Staff Consultation

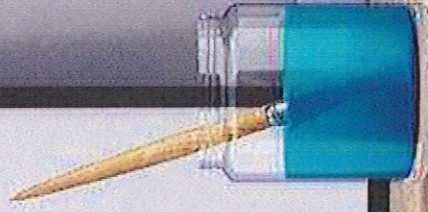
Social Workers (2 FTE) were added in 2019.

Social Work Referrals over Time



Referrals and Interventions range from one interaction to many depending on the cases and needs of students and families. These graphs represent one student and not the amount of intervention needed.

Children with
special needs are not
behind — they're on a
different journey.
A path filled with courage,
growth, and strength.
And every step they take
is a victory worth
celebrating.





THANK YOU!

Any questions?



STUDENT SUPPORT STAFFING BENCHMARKS

District	Enrollment	Psychs	Social Workers	Counselors	Total Staff
New Hartford	448	2	1	1	4
Thomaston	700	0*	3	4	7
Region 12	812	2.5	1	6	9.5
Winchester	1,000	1	5	1	7
Canton	1,405	5	5	5	15
Region 14	1,526	4	4	11	19
Region 20	1,600	4	3.8	8	15.8
New Fairfield	2,000	6	4	8	18
Wolcott	2,113	5	4	8	17
Watertown	2,529	8	6	7	21
Bethel	3,120	4	6	10	20
Region 15	3479	8	2	14	24

*Thomaston utilizes third-party contracts for psychological evaluations.

PROVIDER TO STUDENT RATIO

District	Student Population	Total Providers	Provider/Student ratio
Region 14	1,526	19	80
Region 12	812	9.5	85
Canton	1,405	15	94
Thomaston	700	7	100
Region 20	1,600	15.8	101
New Fairfield	2,000	18	111
New Hartford	448	4	112
Watertown	2529	21	120
Wolcott	2,113	17	124
Winchester	1,000	7	143
Region 15	3,479	24	145
Bethel	3,120	20	156

High-Level Growth Comparison

THE DATA REVEALS A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN THE **BREADTH** OF SERVICE (TOTAL STUDENTS REACHED) AT THE EXPENSE OF THE **DEPTH** OF SERVICE (ACTIONS PER STUDENT).

	2019-2020	2025-2026	% Change
Total Interactions (Cases)	42	154	+266%
Total Touchpoints (Actions)	325+	291	-10%
Avg. Touchpoints per Case	~7.7	~1.9	-75%
McKinney-Vento Cases	0	9	New Need