

FAQs

MTSD 2026-2027 Budget

In response to the budget survey, the Mansfield Township School District would like to answer some commonly asked question that arose in the comments section.

We will also take this opportunity to clarify some existing misconceptions that the survey made apparent.

This budget season is difficult for schools across the state due to massive health benefits increases and we understand that our community wants clear answers as to why MTSD is considering an increase to the tax levy.

Q: Why can't you just increase class sizes?

Answer:

A tax levy of **2% or below** will raise class sizes to the following levels:

K	Enrollment dependent
Grade 1	23 students*
Grade 2	23 students*
Grade 3	20 students
Grade 4	25 students*
Grade 5	24 students*
Grade 6	23 students

*Over recommended sizes

Research shows that in mixed demographic classrooms, keeping class sizes smaller, **especially in K-3**, boosts academic achievement, narrows gaps, enhances engagement, and allows teachers to meet diverse student needs.

A: Research Supports Our Current Class Sizes

Class Size Considerations in Mansfield Township Schools

Research-Based Guidance for Mixed-Demographic Classrooms



Early Grades Benefit Most

- ✓ K–3: 15–20 students → Higher literacy & achievement
- ✓ Smaller classes reduce achievement gaps

(Brookings STAR, 2020)



Mixed Demographics Amplify Impact

- ✓ Enables differentiation, inclusion & engagement
- (Class Size Matters Meta-Analysis)*



Social & Behavioral Gains

- ✓ Increased participation & improved classroom climate
- (ECLS-K 2011, Springer Open)*

Recommended Class Sizes

Grade Level	Target Class Size	Focus Area
 K–2	18–20	Early Literacy & Support
 3–5	20–22	Differentiation & Inclusion
 6–8	22–23	Heterogeneous Classes
 9–12	22–25	Teacher Support Critical

Q: What will happen to Special Education?

Answer:

Special Education services are protected by two laws: IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Special Education services that are in IEPs and 504 Plans will not be changed.

What would change is the burden on case managers and paraprofessionals. If administration is cut, intervention and behavioral support will be decreased as well.

Q: Why don't you just cut Administrators?



That would certainly be a quick fix! However, Mansfield Township School District actually has the **lowest cost per pupil** in the Warren Hills Cluster for Administrators.

Last school year, we restructured administration to cut one position from a 12-month to a 10-month position and hired from within our current staff, creating an additional savings. We streamlined administrative support staff, as well.

Each of our administrators wears more than one hat, allowing for costs savings through overseeing additional responsibilities.

Additionally, we are looking into shared-service agreements for the future to cut costs even further.

A: MTSD Administration already has Dual Roles

- Superintendent/Director of Special Education
- Principal/Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Assistant Principal/MTSS Coordinator (10 months)

The administration at Mansfield Elementary School is proud to serve the community and work together to make sure every child and family gets the support they need to have the best school experience.

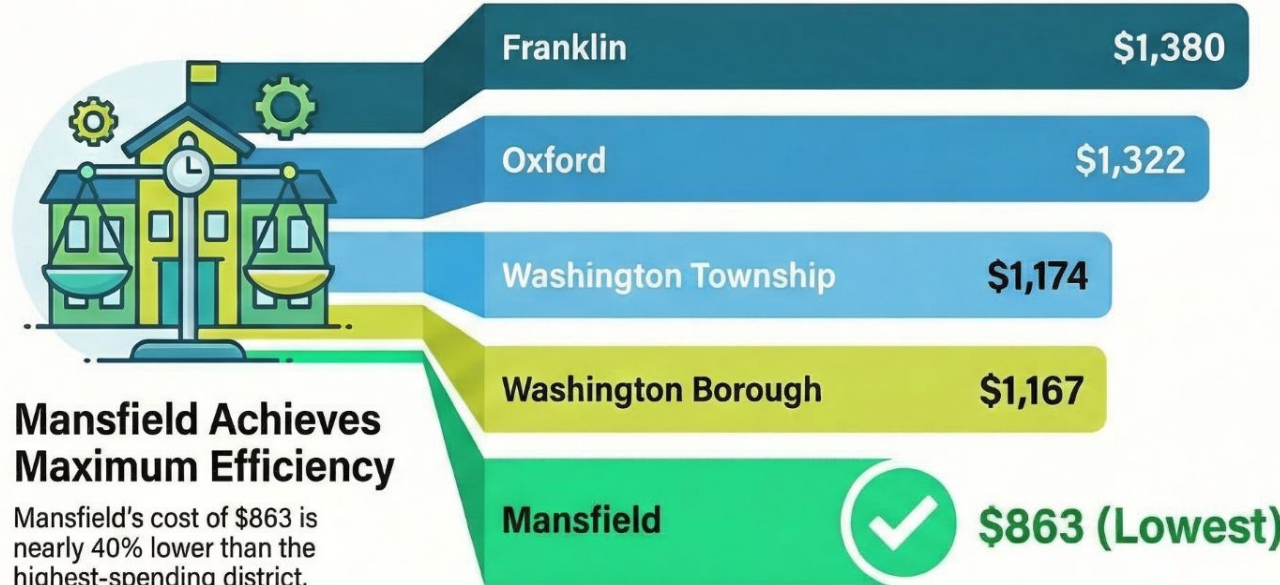
Cutting administration at Mansfield actually means cutting direct services to our students.

Efficiency in Education: Comparing Administrative Spending Across the Warren Hills Cluster

Administrative Spending Per Pupil

- **Comprehensive Salary Inclusion**

- Calculations explicitly include Superintendents, Principals/Supervisors, and Business Administrators.



Key Drivers of Cost

- **Shared Roles Reduce Overhead**



Mansfield minimizes costs by combining roles, such as Superintendent and Director of Special Services.

- **Small District Overhead Challenges**



Smaller districts like Franklin and Oxford face higher costs due to fixed administrative overhead.

Q: Where did all the money go?

Answer:

In July 2024, a budget deficit was discovered, investigated, and resolved through staff cuts, cost-cutting measures, and fiscally conservative spending in all areas. We replenished all accounts and put the district on a much better footing.

The current budget situation is unrelated and is directly due to the combination of the adequacy gap in state funding and the historic increases in health care benefits for staff.



Health care benefits and expenses from legal mandates rose by just under **\$1 million** between the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school year budgets.

Q: Why don't teachers pay for health benefits?



A: They do!

All staff members pay a percentage of their health benefits. The percentage a staff member contributes goes up as an employee's salary goes up.

Chapter 44 is a NJ Law that limits the amount that school staff can pay. School districts cannot override NJ law.

Q: Why won't the state give us more money?

Answer:

According to the state's adequacy formula, MTSD is underfunded by the local tax levy by **\$1.96 million dollars**.



How NJ Calculates Adequacy Funding



MTSD is \$1.96 million short of the money needed for a “thorough and efficient” education for our students, the legal standard.



Adequacy Funding = **Base Funding** + Student Need Weights **x** Regional Cost Adjustment

Q: But, what about those social media claims?

A: Don't believe everything you read on the internet...

Mansfield Township School District: Budget Reality Check

Overspending Myth?



District is spending too much.



Budgets are too large and excessive.

Claim:
"The district is overspending!"

VS.

Modest Budget Growth



Average Audited Spending Increases

1.77% Per Year



Spending within
State Cap Limits



Careful Financial Management

Reality:
\$1.96 Million Adequacy Gap

District funding is below NJ's adequacy target.

Q: What are you doing to fix the situation?

Answer:

- The district is currently in discussions to share services in several areas and will continue to aggressively pursue shared services to provide greater efficiency.
- The district will continue to apply for state and private grants. We received the LIFT Grant for early literacy in 2025-2026 and hope to hear soon if we were approved for the High-Impact tutoring grant that we applied for in February.
- We will continue to work with our county and state colleagues to create change in the school funding formula and grant distribution to Warren County, a serious issue that harms our beloved rural school districts in NJ.