

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Gateway Regional School District will provide an exemplary education that challenges all students in an instructional setting appropriate to their needs.

All visitors attending the school committee meeting should sign in at the security booth.

FY '27 Budget Hearing Wednesday, March 4, 2026 Gateway Performing Arts Center

7:00 P.M.

7:02 PM I. OPENING OF MEETING & QUESTION TO SEE IF ANYONE IS RECORDING

Call to order: Mr. Forgue, Chairperson

BLANDFORD

CHESTER

Brian Forgue
Jason Forgue

HUNTINGTON

Pegg Dragon
Lisa Goding

MIDDLEFIELD

MONTGOMERY

Peter DeGregorio

RUSSELL

Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

James Hayes

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Melissa Matarazzo, Superintendent
Amy Mason, School Business Administrator

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Martha Gendron, Littleville Asst. Principal
Joan Tuttle, Dir. of Accountability & Grants
Dr. Todd Gazda, Chester Principal
Melissa McCaul, Littleville Principal
Chris Parker, Technology Director
Dr. William Sullivan, GRS Principal

Val Zeh, GRS Assistant Principal

OTHERS: Peg Dragon Husband

7:00 PM II. FY '27 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

- [Shared budget slides](#)

- Jason Forgue sked how the district arrives at a 17.44% increase if towns are discussing approximately an 8% increase in spending and about 1.5% in another category.
Requested clarification on how the numbers connect.
 - Dr. Matarazzo explained that the figures referenced are minimum contributions provided by the state, while the remaining amount reflects expected district expenditures. The additional increase represents the difference between FY26 and FY27 projections.
 - Noted that the math appears inconsistent and stated that the committee should work toward establishing more accurate and clearly aligned numbers.
- Jason Forgue asked how much of the information being discussed had come to light within the last seven days.
 - Committee Discussion: Members acknowledged that upcoming votes may be difficult, particularly if budget decisions could impact staffing. It was noted that voting on the budget may be very uncomfortable if positions are potentially eliminated.
- Pegg Dragon asked whether towns have the ability to vote for increases higher than 2.5%.
 - Dr. Matarazzo clarified that the 2.5% limit applies to overall tax levy increases under state law.
- Jason Forgue referenced that South Hadley is proposing an approximately \$11 million increase via override, noting the situation despite limitations on tax increases.
- Brian Forgue reported that Chester is currently going through its budget process and that towns are facing similar financial pressures as the school district.
 - Chester experienced student enrollment in the hilltowns FY26
 - To balance the budget, the town used its education stabilization fund.
 - While overrides are technically an option, they are not always feasible for towns to pursue.
- Committee Question - In previous years, the district used Rural School Aid as a one-time funding source. Asked where that funding will be applied next year.
 - Dr. Matarazzo explained that last year the funds were used for operational services. The district tries not to rely on Rural School Aid, but currently some positions are supported by those funds.
- Committee Question - Asked whether this specific financial data has been sent to town administrators yet.
 - Dr. Matarazzo stated that the information has not yet been sent.

8:00 PM III. ADJOURNMENT by 8 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

James Hayes
School Committee Secretary