

Selah School District 2026-27 Budget / Fiscal Survey Results Feedback Themes



Responding to Financial Challenges: How We Got Here

Selah is experiencing similar budget challenges as many other school districts in WA, including a shortage of funding, and a declining enrollment.

The key areas where Selah is underfunded are-

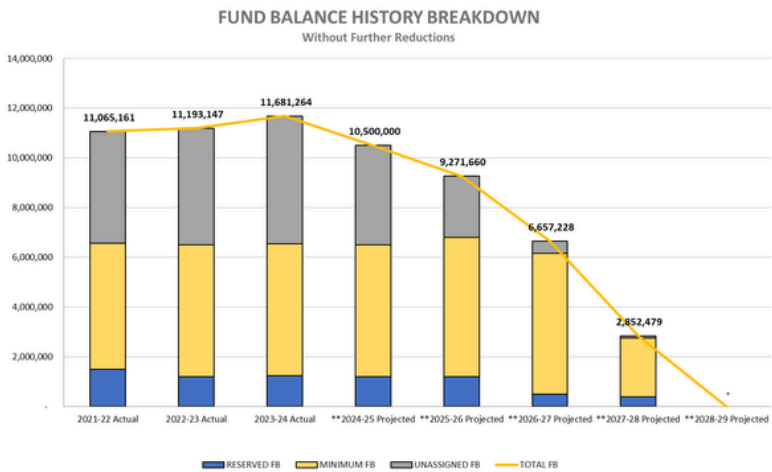
- Employee Compensation and Benefits - state funding provided is distributed using an average salary versus actual costs which has created a “salary gap” which drives the need to use local funds to offset.
- Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC) - costs are increasing at a much higher rate than state funding provided (i.e insurance and utilities).
- Program Funding for Special Education, Transportation, and Sub costs, etc. are not sufficiently funded to adequately run programs and cover sub costs.
- Federal Funding although Selah has not seen significant reductions in federal funding to date, funds continue to remain at risk. Additionally, allocations have not increased over time which has created other budget challenges, specifically covering rising staffing costs.

Q: When did the district begin to see declining enrollment?

A: The district’s enrollment fully recovered in 2023-24 after the decline during Covid. In 2024-25, the district experienced a drop in enrollment in the amount of 52 student FTE.

Declining Enrollment- (Includes RS, TK, and OD)

School Year	Student Enrollment Year End Average FTE	Decline	
2023-24	3693		
2024-25	3641	(52)	
2025-26 Projected	3577	(64)	
2026-27 Projected	3468	(109)	\$1.1M (\$10K per student FTE)
Total Projected Loss		(225)	Projected loss over 3 years



Q: Why are we considering cuts when we are sitting on a 14%+ fund balance?

A: The chart to the left provides the projected fund balance forecast if no further reductions are made. The projected ending fund balance would fall below the required minimum per board policy in 2027-28, and the district would be in binding conditions.

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Reducing Costs While Preserving Classroom Impact

As we navigate necessary budget reductions, our guiding principle remains unchanged; the classroom must stay at the center of every decision we make.

Q: Why is the focus for reductions on staffing?

A: The 2025-26 annual budget is \$68M and 84% is compensation and benefits.

Q: How are staffing reductions being made?

A: Staffing reductions are being made through attrition. A Reduction in Force (RIF) will not be implemented. Every position that is vacated is being analyzed to determine if reductions can be made so that funding shortages can be covered. Reductions are being made across the district (administrative, certificated, and classified positions) as attrition occurs. This includes reductions at the district office.

Q: How are certificated, classified and administrative building staffing levels determined?

A: Staffing allocations for the basic education program are determined based on student enrollment projections. Administrative allocations are determined based on student enrollment projections, staffing size, and building, department and district needs.

Q: What reductions have been made to administrative positions throughout this process (to date)?

A: As administrative positions come open, they are being analyzed for potential reduction. To date, the Associate Superintendent for District Operations position has been re-structured to divide current duties and responsibilities to two other administrative positions. The re-structure allowed the district to eliminate a classified director position in the district office and replace it with a support staff position. Total savings with these shifts is approximately \$150,000. As a reminder, the other district level administrative position eliminated in planning for the 2024-25 school year was the Director of Student Success. As other positions are vacated, further analysis will be done for those positions.

Q: What will happen to the staffing for the younger students (RL, JCP, SIS)? This age group needs a lot more supervision than most people realize.

A: Basic education staffing for K-3 is funded at a 17:1 ratio. Class sizes can run slightly higher than this due to specialists and special education teachers being part of the equation. Additionally, the district prioritizes additional levy funds to help cover classified duties (supervision, etc. for the elementary schools).

Q: Why doesn't the district look at changing school hours for RL to an earlier schedule like the other two elementary schools?

A: Transportation routing and staffing does not work with all three elementary schools on the same tiered schedule. An analysis was completed again this year to see how it could work without success.

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Prioritizing People by Reducing Non–Personnel Costs First

We have focused on reductions to materials, supplies and operating costs (MSOC) over the past three years and will continue to do so.

- **Travel** - For the past three years, it has been a priority to limit out of state travel. Authorized travel with students for the student experience is a priority.
- **Utilities savings** - emphasis will be provided again for lights and computers and lab shut down at night, etc.
- **Department, District Office, and Building Budgets** - All budgets have been reduced annually the past couple of years.
- **Limiting color copies** - this will be emphasized again to all buildings and departments.

Q: Why are we not passing device (chromebook) damage costs on to families?

A: We are passing on damage costs to families.

Q: Why are we not charging outside groups to use our facilities?

A: We do charge users based on classification of the group per Board Policy 4260.

Q: Why do we continue to provide meals at no cost to students?

A: Meals are currently provided at no cost to all students through a federally funded program based on district eligibility. This benefit supports families and ensures all students have access to nutritious meals.

Understanding Capital Projects: Separate Funding, Separate Purpose

Q: Why are we adding field turf and a CTE addition at the high school when we are in a budget shortfall situation?

A: Both projects are being funded by the Capital Projects Fund (CPF). Funds held in the CPF must be used for capital projects. These funds cannot be used for compensation and other operational expenses (salaries, benefits, etc.). Additionally, the CTE addition funding came from a private donation of \$4.1M, and eligible state match funds for the project. The field turf is being funded by left over state match funds from prior capital projects.

Beyond Reductions: Planning for Long–Term Stability

Q: Is there a necessity for budget reductions over subsequent years?

A: It is necessary to bring expenditures in line with revenues over the next two to three years so the District can be in a place where fiscal stability can be sustained for years to come. The long term fiscal stability for the district is definitely a benefit during times like these where reductions need to be made. The cash reserve is being used, in part, to help soften the amount of reductions needing to be made to bring expenditures in line with revenues through this process.