

**Newburyport Public Schools**  
**FY27 School Budget Follow-up Information**  
June 11, 2026

As the City Council reviews the FY27 City appropriation for the Newburyport Public Schools, we want to share additional information in advance of the June 11 school budget workshop.

Throughout the FY27 budget process, the School Committee and district leadership team have worked to present the budget in a way that is transparent, student-centered, and grounded in the financial realities facing the district. This follow-up builds on information contained in the [FY27 budget presentations](#), the [April 8, 2026 FY27 Budget FAQ](#), and the [FY27 Adopted Budget Book](#).

The information below is organized around several key budget topics, including budget development and cost containment, staffing and enrollment, special education cost drivers, use of school revenues and fund balances, compensation and benefits, and selected line-item clarifications. Many of the questions raised throughout the budget review process overlap across categories, so this follow-up is organized by budget theme rather than by individual question.

## **1. Budget Development and Cost Containment**

The FY27 budget development process began with a level-service City appropriation need of approximately \$42.6 million. As shown in the [FY27 Adopted Budget Book](#), through staffing changes, operational reductions, turnover savings, and the strategic use of available funds, the district reduced the initial City appropriation request by approximately \$1.6 million, resulting in the requested City appropriation of **\$40,968,666**, or a **3.88%** increase over FY26. The total FY27 budget is \$47,350,950, or a 6.25% increase over FY26.

The adopted budget also reflects a reduction of **8.7 FTE positions**, along with additional savings from turnover and hiring at different salary levels. These adjustments were made while trying to preserve core programs, maintain reasonable class size guidelines, and minimize impacts on students wherever possible.

FY27 cost containment strategies include:

- Reducing or reallocating positions where enrollment, turnover, or program design allowed;
- Capturing retirement and turnover savings;
- Reviewing non-personnel accounts for reductions and offsets;
- Using grants, Circuit Breaker, School Choice, and revolving funds to offset eligible costs;
- Reviewing fee-supported programs and related revolving funds;
- Continuing to build and maintain in-district special education programming where appropriate;
- Limiting new initiatives unless required, externally funded, or aligned with strategic priorities.

As shown in the [March 11 budget update](#) and subsequent presentations, several specific adjustments were made during the budget process, including staffing reallocation and attrition, enrollment-driven staffing adjustments, facilities and technology reductions, additional line-item refinements, and the use of available School Choice and revolving fund balances.

Additional reductions beyond those reflected in the adopted budget would become increasingly difficult to make without more noticeable impacts on students' day-to-day experiences.

## 2. Staffing, Enrollment, and Ratios

Staffing decisions are informed by enrollment, but they are also shaped by grade-level cohorts, required services, specialized programming, student support needs, and scheduling models.

As shown in the [FY27 Adopted Budget Book](#), Newburyport currently serves **2,104 students**, including **21.2% students with disabilities**, which is slightly above the statewide percentage of 21.1%.

Staffing levels are affected by several factors, including:

- Grade-level cohort size;
- Class size guidelines;
- Special education services required by individual student IEPs;
- English learner services;
- Student support, counseling, and intervention needs;
- Middle school team structure;
- High school course selection and scheduling;
- Specialized programming;
- Building configuration and physical classroom constraints.

Over the past several years, the district has made targeted investments in areas such as world language, performing arts, English learner services, adjustment counselors, social workers, interventionists, therapeutic learning centers, BRYT programming (Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition), and language-based programming. These investments respond to student needs, preserve programming, meet legal requirements, and, where appropriate, reduce reliance on more costly out-of-district placements.

As shown in the FY27 Adopted Budget Book [appendix](#), the district has also provided public information on resident and School Choice enrollment by grade level, staffing trends over time, teacher staffing distribution by step and lane, and the teacher salary schedule.

### Why Staffing Ratios Need Context

Student-to-teacher ratios should be interpreted carefully because they are broad staffing indicators, not classroom-size measures.

DESE’s current [2025-26 Teacher Data](#) report displays teacher FTE and student-to-teacher ratio data at the district and school level and was last updated on February 26, 2026. In that report, Newburyport is listed at 210.0 teacher FTE, 99.2% licensed, and a 10.0 to 1 student-to-teacher ratio, compared with the statewide ratio of 11.7 to 1.

That ratio does not mean typical Newburyport classrooms have 10 students. Depending on how positions are reported, the “teacher” category may include classroom teachers, special education teachers, interventionists, specialists, English learner teachers, adjustment counselors, school social workers, related service providers (such as occupational or physical therapists) and other licensed educators.

For that reason, classroom experience is better understood by looking at actual class-size information, especially at the elementary level where staffing is most directly tied to classroom sections.

At Bresnahan, integrated preschool programming affects staffing ratios because preschool classrooms require different staffing structures than elementary classrooms. At Molin and other levels, inclusion and co-teaching models can also affect ratios because both general education and special education staff may support students within the same classroom or grade-level structure.

This helps explain two related comparison points: Newburyport may appear higher in teacher FTEs per 100 students and lower in paraprofessional FTEs per 100 students because many specialized instructional and student support services are provided by certified educators and licensed service providers rather than structured primarily through paraprofessional positions. These comparisons should be viewed alongside student needs, program design, service requirements, and licensure requirements.

**Elementary Class Size Information**

The elementary staffing plan reduces two classroom sections while keeping projected average class sizes within the planning ranges shown below.

Grade Level	FY26 Enrollment	FY26 Classrooms	FY26 Avg. Class Size	FY27 Projected Enrollment	FY27 Projected Classrooms	FY27 Projected Avg. Class Size	FY27 Planning Range
K	117	7	16.7	126	7	18.0	16-18
1	114	7	16.3	124	7	17.7	17-19
2	159	8	19.9	118	6	19.6	19-21
3	121	7	17.3	160	8	20.0	20-22

Grade Level	FY26 Enrollment	FY26 Classrooms	FY26 Avg. Class Size	FY27 Projected Enrollment	FY27 Projected Classrooms	FY27 Projected Avg. Class Size	FY27 Planning Range
4	153	7	21.9	124	6	20.6	21-23
5	141	7	20.1	152	7	21.6	21-23
<b>Total</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>19.6</b>	—

Because elementary classroom sections are not fractional, reducing one additional section would require redistributing all students in that grade across the remaining classrooms. This can quickly move class sizes outside the district’s planning ranges.

### Impact of One Additional Section Reduction

#### Grade 4

Scenario	Sections	Average Class Size
FY27 Budget	6	20.6
One additional section reduced	5	24.8

Grade 4 is projected at 20.6 students per class, within the FY27 planning range of 21-23. Based on DESE’s December 2017 research brief, [Massachusetts Class Size Reduction](#), this is close to the Northeast regional median of 20.4 and below the statewide median of 21.4. Reducing one additional Grade 4 section would increase the average to 24.8, above the district’s planning range and above the statewide 95th percentile benchmark of 24.1.

#### Grade 5

Scenario	Sections	Average Class Size
FY27 Budget	7	21.6
One additional section reduced	6	25.3

Grade 5 is projected at 21.6 students per class, within the FY27 planning range of 21-23. The DESE [brief](#) provides Grade 5 subject-area benchmarks rather than a direct general education benchmark. A Grade 5 average of 21.6 is near the statewide median for Grade 5 math classes of 21.4 and below the 75th percentile for both Grade 5 math and ELA. Reducing one additional Grade 5 section would increase the average to 25.3, above the district’s planning range and above the Grade 5 ELA 95th percentile benchmark.

These examples illustrate why the FY27 elementary staffing plan reflects a balance between reducing sections where possible and maintaining manageable elementary class sizes.

### 3. Special Education Cost Drivers

As shown in the [FY27 Adopted Budget Book](#), special education is the largest FY27 budget driver, particularly out-of-district tuition and transportation. The budget reflects approximately 34 out-of-district placements, including several high-cost residential programs. These costs are legally required, student-specific, and can change quickly based on student needs, move-ins, placement changes, or transportation requirements.

#### Why Special Education Costs Can Change Quickly

Driver	Budget Impact
Move-ins	District becomes responsible for required services and/or special education placements when eligible students move into Newburyport
IEP service changes	Additional services or staffing may be required during the year
Out-of-district placements	Tuition can be significant and is often not discretionary
Residential placements	Costs are higher and may include education and residential components
Specialized transportation	Cost depends on placement location, route availability, student needs, and vendor market

Special education staffing ratios should be viewed in context. The number of staff needed is driven by the services required in student IEPs, not only by the total number of students with disabilities. A district’s ratio can also be affected by whether it operates specialized in-district programs, whether students require intensive services, and whether services are provided by district staff or contracted providers.

Newburyport has invested in in-district specialized programming to serve students closer to home where appropriate. These programs require staffing, but they can also reduce reliance on more expensive out-of-district placements when students can be appropriately served in-district. The goal is not simply to increase staffing, but to build programs that allow students to be served appropriately in-district when possible, rather than relying on more costly external placements.

## **Private Residential Tuition**

The FY26 budget showed \$0 in the private residential tuition line because those costs were presumed to be funded through Circuit Breaker or other available special education resources rather than shown separately in that specific operating budget line.

For FY27, the district has taken a more comprehensive budget presentation approach and has reflected all known special education tuition costs in the budget, regardless of whether the costs are ultimately supported by Circuit Breaker, the general fund, School Choice, or another available funding source. This provides a clearer picture of the district's known obligations and the total cost pressure associated with out-of-district and residential placements.

The FY27 projection is based on known placements, current information, and expected tuition rates at the time of budget development. It is firmer than a placeholder estimate because it reflects actual known obligations. However, it remains subject to change because special education placements can change during the year due to move-ins, student needs, team decisions, placement availability, or other circumstances.

## **Extraordinary Relief**

The district applies for Circuit Breaker Extraordinary Relief each year, regardless of whether we know in advance that the district will qualify. This ensures the district is pursuing all available state reimbursement opportunities for eligible special education costs.

For FY26, Newburyport did qualify for extraordinary relief. On April 23, 2026, DESE notified the district that its FY26 special education instruction and tuition costs claimable under Circuit Breaker exceeded FY25 claimable costs by **41.70%**, which met the threshold for relief. The district was awarded an extraordinary relief payment of **\$452,909**.

While extraordinary relief is helpful, it is a reimbursement mechanism and does not eliminate the underlying recurring cost pressure created by high-cost placements.

## **Special Education Transportation**

Special education transportation is another significant cost driver. Transportation costs depend on the location of placements, student needs, vehicle requirements, aide requirements, routing, and vendor availability.

The district has been actively reviewing ways to manage these costs more efficiently. For FY27, Newburyport solicited pricing for out-of-district transportation services with the goal of creating more predictable pricing and service stability, rather than pricing individual runs separately each year.

Superintendent Sean Gallagher, Director of Student Services Brad Brooks, and Director of Finance and Operations Ethan Manning also recently met with the CREST Collaborative regarding work they are doing to more efficiently procure and cost-share out-of-district transportation services. The district will continue to evaluate whether participation in a collaborative or consortium-based model would provide better pricing, routing efficiency, and/or service stability.

This is an example of an area where the district is pursuing cost containment, but the savings potential depends on student placements, vendor availability, route geography, and whether there are opportunities to share routes with other districts.

#### 4. Funding Sources, Revolving Funds, and Grants

##### School Revenue Sources and Budget Offsets

The [FY27 Adopted Budget Book](#) includes the district’s Source of Funds summary on page 21. The school budget is supported by multiple funding sources, including the City appropriation, Circuit Breaker, School Choice, grants, revolving funds, tuition-supported programs, fee-supported programs, and other available school revenues.

For FY27, the district is relying more heavily on school revenue sources and prior-year balances because of the significant cost pressure associated with special education, particularly out-of-district and residential placements. These resources help reduce the impact on the City appropriation, but they have limitations. Some are restricted by law or grant rules, some depend on annual receipts, and some rely on prior-year balances. As noted in the FY27 Adopted Budget Book, these resources are critical in balancing the budget this year, but they do not represent a long-term solution.

##### FY27 Budgeted Use Compared to Anticipated Receipts

The table below shows where FY27 budgeted use exceeds projected current-year receipts and therefore relies on prior-year fund balance.

Funding Source	FY27 Budgeted Use	Projected FY27 Receipts	Use of Available Balance	Notes
Circuit Breaker	\$2,600,000	\$2,550,000	\$50,000	Special education reimbursement; one-year lag
School Choice	\$2,000,000	\$1,324,100	\$675,900	Supports school operating budget

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>FY27 Budgeted Use</b>	<b>Projected FY27 Receipts</b>	<b>Use of Available Balance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Athletics Revolving	\$361,034	\$360,000	\$1,034	Fee-supported athletics costs
International/ Other Tuition	\$100,000	\$60,000	\$40,000	Includes Educatus/international tuition
Preschool Tuition	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$0	Tuition-supported preschool program
Transportation	\$265,000	\$120,000	\$145,000	Fee-supported transportation revenue
1:1 Program	\$95,000	\$95,000	\$0	Student device program

### **Circuit Breaker**

Circuit Breaker is a state special education reimbursement program. It reimburses districts for a portion of eligible prior-year special education costs above the state-established threshold. Because the reimbursement is based on prior-year costs, there is a one-year lag.

For FY27, the district's Circuit Breaker budget assumes the use of \$2,550,000 in anticipated FY27 receipts and \$50,000 in available carryover balance.

<b>Circuit Breaker Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Projected FY27 Receipts	\$2,550,000
FY27 Budgeted Use	\$2,600,000
Amount Supported by Available Balance	\$50,000
Projected Year-End Balance	\$237,407

## School Choice

School Choice funds are used to support the overall school operating budget. The FY27 budget includes both projected receipts and available fund balance.

School Choice Item	Amount
Projected FY27 Receipts	\$1,324,100
FY27 Budgeted Use	\$2,000,000
Amount Supported by Available Balance	\$675,900
Projected Year-End Balance	\$427,806

## Educatus / International Tuition

Educatus revenue is included within the International/Other Tuition source of funds. The FY27 budget includes \$100,000 in International/Other Tuition revenue.

Educatus revenue is generated through international student tuition. These funds are used to support high school programming and international student-related costs.

## Revolving Fund Offsets

The district reviews projected receipts, available fund balance, known obligations, historical spending patterns, and future risk when determining how much revolving fund revenue or fund balance to use as an offset to the operating budget.

The goal is to use available resources to reduce pressure on the City appropriation while avoiding an unsustainable reliance on one-time balances. This is especially important because several FY27 cost pressures, particularly special education, are recurring or may continue into FY28.

The School Committee does not currently have a standalone financial policy governing the use of revolving fund offsets. The district's approach is guided by annual budget review, statutory restrictions on each fund, available balances, projected receipts, and recommendations from district administration.

## 5. Compensation, Collective Bargaining, and Benefits

Teacher salary costs are shaped by collective bargaining agreements, step and lane placement, staff experience, advanced degree lanes, and regional market competitiveness. Health insurance and other benefit assumptions are administered citywide and are affected by municipal plan rates and assumptions outside the direct control of the School Department.

Newburyport’s relative position compared with other districts is influenced by several factors, including staff experience and longevity, [placement on salary schedule steps and lanes](#), negotiated wage schedules, staffing mix by position type, and city-administered benefit costs.

A significant share of NPS educators are experienced staff members placed on higher steps and advanced degree lanes, including Master’s, Master’s +30, or comparable lanes. In fact, 70.8% of NPS educators have at least 10 years of experience. This contributes to higher average salary costs, but it also reflects a stable, experienced workforce. Veteran educators bring deep instructional knowledge, strong relationships with students and families, mentoring capacity for newer staff, and continuity in school programs.

Recent collective bargaining agreements also reflect the district’s need to remain competitive in the regional educator labor market while balancing affordability and long-term budget sustainability. As shown in the FY27 Adopted Budget Book [appendix](#), the district has provided the teacher staffing distribution by step and lane and the teacher salary schedule for public review.

The FY27 budget also reflects contractual salary increases, including step and lane movement, as well as increases in transportation, utilities, supplies, services, and other operating costs.

**Longevity**

<b>Bargaining Unit / Employee Group</b>	<b>Longevity Provision</b>
Teachers	Integrated into Salary Steps 11A-11E
Instructional Assistants	Integrated into Salary Steps 6.10-6.25
AFSCME / Custodial / Clerical	Annual flat-dollar payments (\$1,075 - \$3,000)
AFSCME / Cafeteria	Post-1995 hires receive 50% payment

**Substitutes, Temporary Employees, and Contractors**

The district uses substitutes and temporary employees to cover absences, vacancies, leaves, and other short-term staffing needs. Substitutes may include daily substitutes, long-term substitutes, temporary employees, and, in certain circumstances, contracted service providers.

For specialized or hard-to-fill service needs, such as certain related services, nursing, therapeutic, or evaluation services, the district may use contracted providers when necessary to meet student service requirements and maintain continuity of services.

## **TSA Match**

The Teachers' collective bargaining agreement includes a Tax-Sheltered Annuity (TSA) matching contribution for eligible teachers.

Under the NTA agreement, the School Committee provides a matching contribution between \$100 and \$500, in \$100 increments. To receive the match, the employee must contribute a matching amount to their annuity plan. Employee contributions are deducted in equal installments and must equal or exceed \$500 by May 15 to receive the maximum district match.

Eligibility is limited to teachers hired after September 1, 1995, beginning in the employee's fourth year of consecutive service. Teachers hired before June 30, 1995 receive a different retirement-related benefit through a cash buyback of unused sick leave upon retirement.

The individual liability is capped at \$500 per eligible teacher per year. There is not a separate aggregate districtwide cap identified for this benefit.

## **City-Administered Benefits**

Health insurance, retirement, and certain other employee benefit costs are administered citywide. City Finance/HR is best positioned to provide information regarding city-administered benefit costs, premium assumptions, retirement costs, and related liabilities.

## **6. Building Administration and Student Support**

There is not a single enrollment threshold that automatically determines whether an administrator, such as an Assistant Principal position becomes full-time, part-time, or stipend-based. Administrative staffing is reviewed based on enrollment, grade span, student needs, staff supervision requirements, evaluation caseload, safety and operational responsibilities, family support needs, and the complexity of the school program.

As previously shared in the [April 8 FY27 Budget FAQ](#), building administrators are front-line educators who work directly with students, staff, and families every day. They are responsible for daily operations, supervision, safety, staff evaluation, hiring, student support, discipline, family communication, school improvement planning, and instructional leadership.

The district also reviewed leadership staffing across comparable districts during the FY27 budget process. As shown in the budget presentation, Newburyport's leadership staffing was 0.9 FTE per 100 students across three comparison methodologies. The data suggests Newburyport's leadership staffing is generally in line with peer districts, while the district continues to examine operations for opportunities to work more efficiently.

Leadership Staffing Comparison			
Comparison Group	Newburyport Leadership FTE per 100 Students	Range Among Comparable Districts	Newburyport Position
RADAR Demographic Group	0.9	0.7-1.3	In line with peers
RADAR Wealth Group	0.9	0.7-1.5	Lower end of peer range
DESE Comparison Group	0.9	0.6-1.3	In line with peers

**7. Athletics and Other Program Areas**

Several program areas are supported by a combination of operating budget, grants, fees, and revolving funds. These sources help support programming but are subject to restrictions, availability, and sustainability considerations.

**Athletics**

The 2.0 positions budgeted under Athletics, Professional Salaries are the Director of Athletics and the Athletic Trainer.

As previously noted in the [April 8 FY27 Budget FAQ](#), the increase in coaches’ salaries reflects contractual obligations under the collective bargaining agreement, including negotiated stipend increases and a market adjustment to the athletic stipend schedule after several years without a significant adjustment.

The Athletics Revolving Fund supports athletics-related costs that are not fully covered by the general operating budget. These costs include coaches, officials, transportation, supplies, equipment, facility costs, police details, meet fees, and other program expenses. The amount used from the revolving fund is based on projected receipts, available fund balance, and expected program costs, with the goal of supporting the athletics program while maintaining sufficient flexibility for future needs.

## **Curriculum**

The district reviews grant opportunities that may support curriculum work, including ESSA, state literacy initiatives, and other competitive grants.

These funds may support eligible costs such as professional development, intervention supports, supplemental materials, coaching, or implementation planning. However, grant funding is restricted and depends on eligibility, timing, allowable uses, and supplement-not-supplant rules.

For FY27, the district will continue to review whether eligible portions of the ELA curriculum work can be supported with grant funds, while recognizing that some core curriculum costs may require local or other non-grant funding.

## **Technology**

The district maintains a comprehensive internal inventory of technology hardware and software, including instructional platforms, operational systems, cybersecurity tools, student information systems, and device management tools.

For security, privacy, and operational reasons, the district does not typically publish a full itemized inventory of software and systems. The FY27 technology budget reflects the cost of maintaining the instructional, operational, compliance, cybersecurity, and communication systems needed to support students, staff, and district operations.

## **8. Budget Line-Item and Operational Clarifications**

Several FY27 budget lines benefit from additional context, particularly where the budget line reflects a classification, compliance, or capital-versus-operating distinction. The clarifications below address contracted services, lunch monitors, health services, and school administration stipends.

Other questions relate more directly to day-to-day deployment of staff, including custodial shift assignments, grounds maintenance, and crossing guard oversight. Those operational details can be discussed during the June 11 workshop as needed.

### **High School Contracted Services and Masonry**

The FY27 High School contracted services line reflects routine and recurring services within the school operating budget. Over the past five years, spending from this line item has averaged approximately \$23,060. For FY27, the district is budgeting \$35,000 based on known costs and service contracts.

The masonry work identified at the High School is a larger capital need and is not the type of work that would typically be addressed through this annual operating line item. For that reason, the district has included the masonry work in the Capital Improvement Plan, where larger building envelope, masonry, roof, site, and infrastructure needs can be planned and funded more appropriately.

### **School Lunch Monitors**

For FY27, lunch monitors are budgeted in the regular operating budget.

The School Nutrition Revolving Fund is restricted to costs that are reasonable, necessary, and allocable to the school meal program. Because lunch monitors provide general student supervision, the district has budgeted these costs outside of the School Nutrition Revolving Fund for compliance purposes.

The district will continue to review this approach in future budget cycles to determine whether any portion of these costs can be appropriately allocated to the School Nutrition Revolving Fund consistent with state and federal requirements.

### **Health Services Professional Salary**

The 1.0 professional salary position charged at the district level in Health Services is the Director of Health Services/Head of Nursing.

This position provides districtwide nursing leadership, supports state health compliance, oversees health protocols and medical records processes, and helps coordinate nursing services across all school buildings.

### **Sixth Class Stipends**

“Sixth Class Stipends” refers to compensation paid to teachers who teach an additional class beyond the standard full-time teaching load.

Under the NTA collective bargaining agreement, this is part of the Additional Class/Intervention Support Voluntary Program. Eligible teachers may agree to teach one additional class or provide intervention support above their regular schedule. The stipend for a full-year, 5-credit course is \$8,000 in FY27.

From a budget classification standpoint, these stipends are instructional in nature. They were previously shown in Operation of Plant due to historical budget coding, but they are more appropriately reflected in an instructional or school administration salary area because they relate to teaching and academic support, not building operations. The FY27 budget reflects this

classification change so the expense is shown in a budget area that better aligns with the underlying purpose of the stipend.

### **Related Budget Materials**

- [Budget Documents & Presentations](#)
- [FY27 Budget FAQ 4/8/2026](#)
- [School Funding Overview/FAQ](#)
- [NPS Budget Overview Video](#)