Board of Education
2027-2028 Budget Q&A I

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1. **Does the proposed FY28 budget address the three strategic requirements outlined by the (BET), separate from its recommended percentage increase? Can we identify where each requirement is reflected in the budget? Additionally, who is responsible for communicating the district's response to the BET and ensuring appropriate follow up, is it the Board of Education or district administration?**
   The guidelines did not call for the proposed budget to present the three strategies, but they did ask for those ideas to be prepared before presenting at the BET Budget Committee in February. These are high level concept suggestions, not budget impacts for FY28. The staff will be prepared to share three areas.

   The district will spend at least one full day with the BET budget committee, and that is when the district answers any and all questions to anything listed in the guidelines. Right now, the focus is on the BOE as until the BOE determines the approved budget, everything is tentative.

   Staff manage the messaging to the BET as part of the budget process, along with the Chair of the BOE.

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2. **Could the BOE realize savings/efficiencies in the following categories?**

   - **Outplacements**
     No. These are driven by the specific needs of the students who need specific placements, and also annual increases in tuition for the state approved schools.

   - **Bus Contract (can we have a more refined number?)**
     The number is as refined as possible right now based on the RFP process. The cost increase is based on the actual routes as of today and pricing per bus via the proposal. The overall increase is approximately 2.5% based on everything we know today.

   - **Greenwich HS Structure Given Enrollment Declines and Modernization**
     The BOE has discussed this recently, and it greatly depends on what the Board wants to consider. There are opportunities.

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3. **Enrollment at the high school is down 324 students since 2019 when Greenwich HS had 2797 students. In 2031 the high school enrollment is projected to be 2263; after 2031 it begins to rebound. While the Greenwich HS enrollment is lower, it would seem to be a good time to assess the structure of the school and whether there are opportunities to better support our students. Can you talk about the budget impacts of restructuring the high school and what alternative models would make sense for the board to consider?**

   Yes, we can run restructuring options and some financial modeling to coincide with those options.

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4. **Can you please clarify the expected GEA headcount for 2027-2028? Where are we reducing staff and where are we adding staff?**
   The FY28 budget is only reducing 4.0 positions K-5 as presented, due to lower enrollment and the number of classrooms needed. The district has tightened up the secondary schedules over the past several years and there is no more reduction available in the schedule without spiking to unreasonable class sizes across the board.

   The budget adds staff 1.0 for the Central MS co-taught sixth grade team.

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5. **What are the FMLA and sick day/personal trends so far this year? Are we higher or lower than last year?**
   FMLA is running high this year. Teachers' sick days are running lower as of November.

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6. **Are there any investments in general education or the ALP programs?**
   During the 2026 summer, we have added kiln equipment at the GHS art program, robotics and virtual reality equipment for the middle schools.

   We have a math textbook update which impacts ALP and general education in having the necessary supporting resources K-8.

   The district is also working on an updated curriculum and resources for science and math at Greenwich HS.

   The district is investing in two grade levels at Greenwich HS for the technology cycle as students have shared that the current devices are not meeting the needs and have reached the end of life. One area of frustration is that students who take AP exams must rely on their devices for those tests. When given 55 multiple choice questions on an AP exam, if it takes 4-5 seconds to upload the content, it does put more pressure on the student given it's a timed test.

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7. **Special Education**

   - **Given the district's implementation of programs intended to reduce Special Education out of district placements, what factors are driving the proposed $750,000 increase in the outplacement and settlement allocation for FY28? (Page 19, Item #4: FY28 OOD–Settlement, +$750,000)**
     Tuition increases happen annually, which is factored into the budget on this line. The increase is also reflective of students in the pipeline that we are trying to find an appropriate placement for.

   - **As of October 2026, out-of-district placements increased to 83, which is the highest level in five years. What factors have contributed to this increase? Additionally, how is the district measuring the effectiveness of its in-district Special Education programs (UL, PP, W11, Special Program, Wellness Center) in reducing the need for out-of-district placements and associated costs?**

The overall number has not changed much. Currently, there are 30 students who are in OOD placements. The district ended last school year 2025-2026 at 40 students, 10 students then either returned to the district, moved out of Greenwich or graduated/aged out of the program. Each student has an individualized IEP that measures their individual success. For program success, we see very limited movement from a specialized program to an OOD program as the students' needs are being met, whereas previously there were no options for students to receive programming in the district and their only option was an OOD.

There are currently 53 settlements. Due to the changing nature of Special Education, settlements no longer only represent placements, but evaluations through the Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) process, services for providers who do not meet insurance requirements, or the services due to a corrective action from a state complaint.

- **During the past four years, Special Education enrollment has remained relatively stable, while expenditures for in-district Special Education programming have increased by approximately 50%. What are the primary factors driving this increase? Additionally, what measures are being used to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, including student outcomes, staffing adequacy, and cost-effectiveness, to ensure that the increased investment is producing measurable benefits for students?**
  The increase in district Special Education is due to the intensity of need, increase in the number of Special Education students, and maintaining caseloads. At the elementary level, we aim for a workload of no more than 15, at middle school 18, and at high school 21. As such, even a small increase of 30-40 students, increases the indeed for an increase in Special Education teachers and service providers.

- **The proposed budget reflects an expansion of the co-taught model to Central Middle School. Can you provide additional information on the rationale for expanding this model to Central MS? Did you consider any other middle school? What staffing, training, and programmatic support will be in place to ensure successful implementation at the middle school level?**
  Central MS was selected for two reasons. First, it is the feeder school for Cos Cob allowing the students to matriculate to middle school with their elementary peers. Second, in evaluating the home school for the K-5 cohort of students approximately 75% of the students' home school is Central MS. Currently, Central MS has co-teaching for English and math. The additional FTE allows co-teaching support to expand into science and social studies which mirrors the support the students are getting in elementary school. The conversation has begun with the Central MS administration about this needed support for students next year.

- **Additionally, does this expansion represent a broader change in the district's Special Education programming strategy, and how will its effectiveness be evaluated? I would appreciate a better understanding of the long-term vision for**

the co-taught model and its potential expansion and associated costs across the district.
This addition does not represent a change in programming or strategy, but a bridge between current elementary and high school supports offered. A variety of co-taught classes in English, social sciences, math and science are currently offered at Greenwich HS.

- **Given the ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining occupational therapists, what strategies is the district currently using to address staffing shortages? Are there additional recruitment or retention measures that could be considered to improve staffing stability and ensure consistency and continuity of services for students who require OT under their IEPs?**
  Currently, OT services are contracted due to the way in which OT is classified under the town which does not align with the school calendar or need. We have expanded our contract to be able to include multiple providing agencies for OT services and not a single sole provider. Although, one OT is a Town of Greenwich employee.

- **Were paraprofessional positions converted from part-time to full-time, or were existing 0.7 FTE positions increased to 1.0 FTE? Given that regular FTE salaries are budgeted to increase by 9% and temporary salaries by 14% in FY28, what factors are driving increases in both categories? If positions were converted from temporary or part-time to full-time, would we expect to see a corresponding reduction in one of these salary categories? (Page 21, 51010 and 51300)**
  These paraprofessional positions were converted from part time .7 to full time 1.0, which increased the salary amount budgeted, but did not change the head count. The .7 salaries were budgeted in regular FTE salaries for the object code 51010, not temporary, so there would be no decrease to this change.

  The Special Education clerks converting from Non-Represented to GMEA union is the increase in the temporary salary for the object code 51300.

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8. **Can you provide additional information on the rationale for allocating two substitutes to each building? Is this model expected to generate cost savings, improve staffing consistency, or both? How will substitutes be utilized on days when a school is fully staffed? Additionally, will substitutes be assigned specific roles (e.g., classroom teachers versus paraprofessionals), or will they have the flexibility to serve in either capacity based on building needs? (Page 21, 51310)**
   The district already had two building substitutes at every elementary, and three at middle school. In fact, this has been in place for well over a decade. The district added one additional building sub at the elementary schools and one at the middle schools to provide coverage for our paraeducators. The position is a building substitute dedicated to paraeducator needs so that they get to know the students and can step in to make sure that individualized needs are met. If the para building sub is not needed in a building, they are reassigned to assist in other substitute assignments.

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9. **On page 19, the K–5 teacher headcount appears to reflect a reduction of three positions in FY27 and four positions in FY28. However, page 223, under GEA staffing, shows an increase of 2.4 FTE. Can you clarify how these figures reconcile and explain the differences in the staffing changes reflected on these two pages?**
   Page 223 shows the total GEA staffing including K-5 teachers, Special Education teachers and all other GenEd teachers. In both 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 school years, while K-5 teachers are reduced, Special Education teachers are increased. The net of all changes is a 2.4 FTE increase.

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10. **Has the district conducted any formal evaluation or gathered feedback on the implementation of the Curriculum Committee's recommendations from last spring? While we have received positive feedback regarding the bell-to-bell cell phone ban at Greenwich HS, what has been the impact of eliminating iPads in kindergarten and reviewing the thoughtful use of technology across grades K–8? How are these changes being implemented and monitored at the building level, and what additional work or adjustments may be needed to ensure consistency across schools?**
    It is too early to be able to answer this question as data is very preliminary. We will be checking in with our teachers to gain valuable information.

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11. **Where are Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) services reflected in the proposed FY28 budget? Additionally, has the district evaluated the anticipated need for TVI services among incoming K–5 students, and are any staffing or service increases planned to meet those needs?**
    Teacher of the Visually Impaired is reflected in the district's Special Education department. The department is currently looking at what services will need to look like in the coming years as students transcend through upper elementary, middle school, and high school. Dr. Heiligenthaler is already looking at future needs.

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12. **Can you confirm whether all Title I elementary schools are allocated 1.0 social worker, while the remaining eight elementary schools are allocated 0.5 each? What criteria are used to determine social worker staffing allocations across schools?**
    It is confirmed that Title I elementary schools (Hamilton Avenue, New Lebanon, and Julian Curtiss) are allocated 1.0 social worker and the remaining eight elementary schools are allocated 0.5 each in the budget. Additional support is always based on need.

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13. **Can you clarify why North Street School is not listed under the Speech and Hearing Program on page 67 and does not have a corresponding section on page 94, as the other elementary schools appear to have? Is this an omission in the budget document, or is there a specific reason for the difference in reporting?**
    There are 2.0 Teacher Speech at North Street School, which are funded by the IDEA grant.

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14. **What specific services are included under Professional Services Not Otherwise Classified, and what factors are driving the proposed increase in this budget category for FY28? (Page 21, Account 51490)**

Mostly it is the Special Education professional services, for example: speech therapy, psychology therapy, occupational therapy, autism and neurodiversity professional development services, temporary nursing services, etc. It also includes payments for the athletic officials & referees, accompanists supporting the school musical events, and translation/interpretation services supporting the ESL program.

The proposed increase is for the Special Education areas. The factors driving the increases are contractual for services which generally increase annually. Nursing has seen an increase due to a new interpretation of the law which requires nurses to attend field trips for children who have specific medical needs. We try to send building nurses on trips and that leads to a substitute nurse inside the building.

Overview of Professional Services										
Program Name	**Code**	**51400**	**51410**	**51420**	**51440**	**51450**	**51460**	**51490**	**51497**	**Total**
Art	10								5,000	5,000
ESOL	14								4,000	4,000
World Language	16								10,000	10,000
Language Arts	24								35,000	35,000
Math	28								52,000	52,000
Music	30							29,500	15,000	44,500
PE	32								4,000	4,000
Science	34								10,000	10,000
Social Studies	36								7,000	7,000
ALP	38								4,000	4,000
Research	42				5,000		6,000		4,000	15,000
Theatre Arts	45							5,100		5,100
Sports	48			101,800				84,250		186,050
Nursing	49			50,000				15,000		65,000
Guidance	50							1,000		1,000
SPED	53	100,000		2,000,000				477,000	7,500	2,584,500
Windrose	56							1,000		1,000
Pre-School	66							15,000	5,000	20,000
Teaching & Learning	68							25,525	216,250	241,775
BOE	72	550,000				750		7,200		557,950
Superintendent	74							3,000		3,000
Communications	76							6,000		6,000
IT	82						240,000			240,000
Accounting	86		81,000					14,000		95,000
Maintenance of Plants	89							1,800		1,800
Transportation	90				15,000					15,000
Human Resources	93	100,000		20,000		5,000		50,000		175,000
Total		**750,000**	**81,000**	**2,171,800**	**20,000**	**5,750**	**246,000**	**735,375**	**378,750**	**4,388,675**

15. Other

- **Is there an extra hydroponic garden and if not, can we buy one for Community Connections?**
  Unfortunately, there is limited space at Community Connections, but they do have an outdoor garden and patio. We can check with the teacher to see if she feels as though there is room, and then work on writing a grant for the program.

- **What is the $500,000 spent on facility rentals in the 200s?**
  We believe the $500,000 is referring to the year-to-year increase for the object code 52340 Rental of Buildings and Other from the 2025 actual to the 2026 actual. It is for the school bus parking lot rental.

  The district also pays an annual rental for Windrose as it is not a town owned building.

- **Can you identify the line items that have been consistently over budget by 20% or more for the past three years?**
  There are two items that have been consistently over budget by 20% for the past three years:
  51170 Payments for Accumulated Vacation
  53950 Supplies and Material - NOC

- **How is GPS using AI to realize efficiencies? Can we use AI or a scheduling platform for scheduling meetings with teachers, counselors and administrators in the schools?**
  We are utilizing AI across the district for instructional and operational efficiencies. We are in the process of implementing automated scheduling of meetings for our counselors as a first step. We would not use this approach for an administrator.

- **Are we allocating more funds for textbooks?**
  Our textbook allocation is directly aligned to our curriculum management plan. Major updates for 2027-2028 include K-8 math, honors biology, and AP European history. It is important to note that the overall curriculum budget is held flat. The curriculum team works hard to ensure the curriculum management plan drives the need from year to year.

- **When we have a new facilities manager, can we task him or her with looking for efficiencies across our buildings?**
  Yes.

- **Can we do an energy audit of one of our newer buildings, like Glenville?**
  We plan to engage this idea with our in-coming director of facilities.

- **Have we considered hiring a district wide construction manager for all capital projects? What are the approaches of other districts of a similar size?**

We are exploring options, although we tried this option in the past several years with limited success. It was difficult to hire a high quality manager, and the cost of the contract was very high.

Every district is unique in their approach, so it is almost impossible to compare. For instance, in Fairfield, a member of Cabinet manages the facilities, and he has an assistant who manages the major construction projects and overall facilities. This is not greatly different from the role of Ben Branyan and the Director of Facilities (previously Dan Watson).

- **Please lay out the $755,000 Classroom Coverage increase.**
  First, the district has 43 building substitutes budgeted across the schools: two at each elementary school, three at each middle school, and 12 at the high school.

  These substitutes primarily provide classroom coverage when teachers are absent.

  Starting in the 2026-2027 school year, the new model added one paraeducator building substitute at each elementary and middle school, resulting in 14 additional positions. Because these paraeducator substitutes work in the schools on a daily basis, they would become familiar with the staff, individual student needs, and school routines. This is important when supporting students who require assistance with mobility, feeding, or other specialized needs. The addition provides greater continuity of support while also enhancing student and classroom safety. The incremental budget is $480,000.

  Second, the substitute teacher rates have increased across the Fairfield and Westchester County areas. This increases the required budget by $265,000 for both building substitutes and daily substitutes.