



Board of Education Budget Request 2025-26 School Year (FY26)

**Dr. Tamu Lucero, Superintendent
Ryan Fealey, Chief Financial Officer**

Stamford Public Schools

Pre-K to Adult Education

- APPLES Preschool
- 10 Elementary Schools
- 3 K-8 Schools
- 5 Middle Schools
- 3 High Schools
- SPS Anchor
- Remote Learning Program (9-12)
- Adult & Continuing Education

2,400+ staff

- 86% of staff work directly with students
- 97% of staff work in school buildings

16,239 students*

- 5th largest district in CT
- 19% multilingual learners
- 54% free/ reduced price lunch
- 17% students with disabilities

23 Program Sites

- 3M+ sqft of building space
- 300+ acres of property



* Enrollment data current as of October 2024.

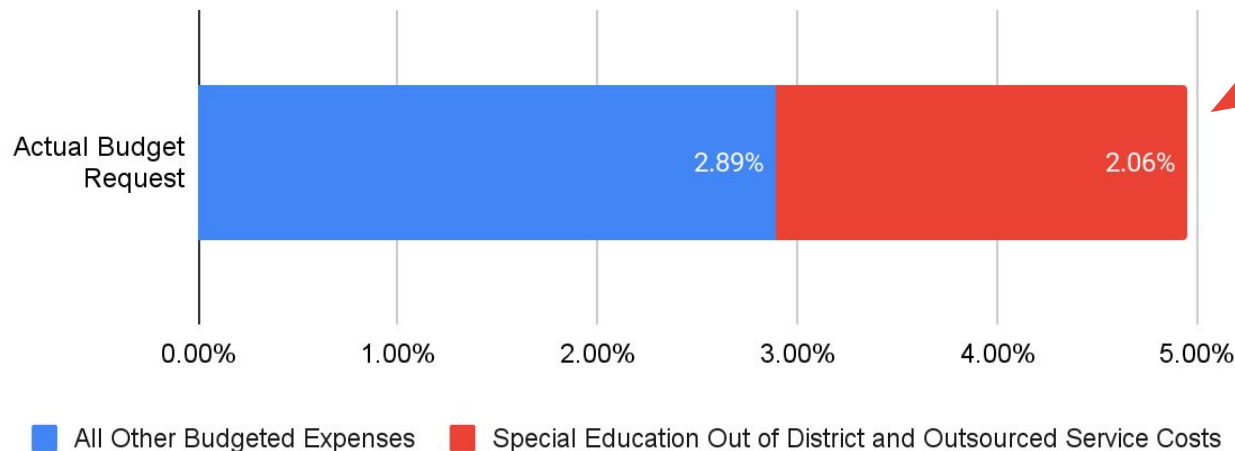
FY26 Superintendent's Budget Request: Target vs. Actual

After moving beyond the “Fiscal Cliff” with an approved FY25 operating budget increase of 5.48%, SPS was determined to submit a status quo budget request for FY26. The target increase was 3%.

Superintendent's Budget Request: 4.95%

- Certain Special Education costs: 2.06%
- All other costs: 2.89%

Even after cutting \$5.1m from other areas in the draft budget, external special education costs still drove the increase beyond the target.



SPS Superintendent's Budget Request in Context

District	Requested Increase	DRG	Financial Pressures Driving Requested Increase
Norwalk	9.70%	H	Cites Out of District tuition, transportation, utility costs as drivers
Fairfield	6.40%	B	Cites Special Education costs, union contracts, transportation, utility costs as drivers
Greenwich	5.40%	B	Cites Special Education costs, union contracts, transportation, reduction in grant funds as drivers
Trumbull	5.26%	B	Cites Special Education costs, union contracts and benefits, transportation as drivers
Stamford	4.95%	H	
New Canaan	4.60%	A	Cites union contracts and benefits as drivers
Westport	4.69%	A	Cites union contracts, health insurance as drivers
Darien	4.39%	A	Proposing cuts to Gifted Programs, Elementary Paraeducators

Board of Education Adjustments

	Amount \$	Increase \$	Increase %
<i>Superintendent's Budget</i>	\$347,108,125	\$16,370,369	4.95%
Increase to Health Insurance to reflect updated State Partnership Plan premiums	\$1,500,000	\$17,870,369	5.40%
Funds to maintain free breakfast and lunch for all students	\$1,000,000	\$18,870,369	5.71%
Addition of 6 Special Education teachers, 2 HS Counselors, 5 OSS; Reduction of 2 Special Education Administrators (Note: No new positions; return of positions reduced in Superintendent's budget).	\$638,742	\$19,509,111	5.90%
Funds for Domus Family Advocate program	\$280,000	\$19,789,111	5.98%
Sum	\$350,526,867	\$19,789,111	5.98%

Post Board of Education Approval Updates*

	Amount \$	Increase \$	Increase %
<i>Board of Education Budget</i>	\$350,526,867	\$19,789,111	5.98%
Adjustment to OPEB costs per Milliman	(\$367,483)	\$19,421,628	5.87%
Adjustment to Pension costs per Milliman	(\$20,361)	\$19,401,267	5.87%
Adjustment to utility costs per CES (natural gas)	\$169,893	\$19,571,160	5.92%
Sum	\$350,308,916	\$19,571,160	5.92%

*These changes are not reflected in the budget book or in the remainder of this document

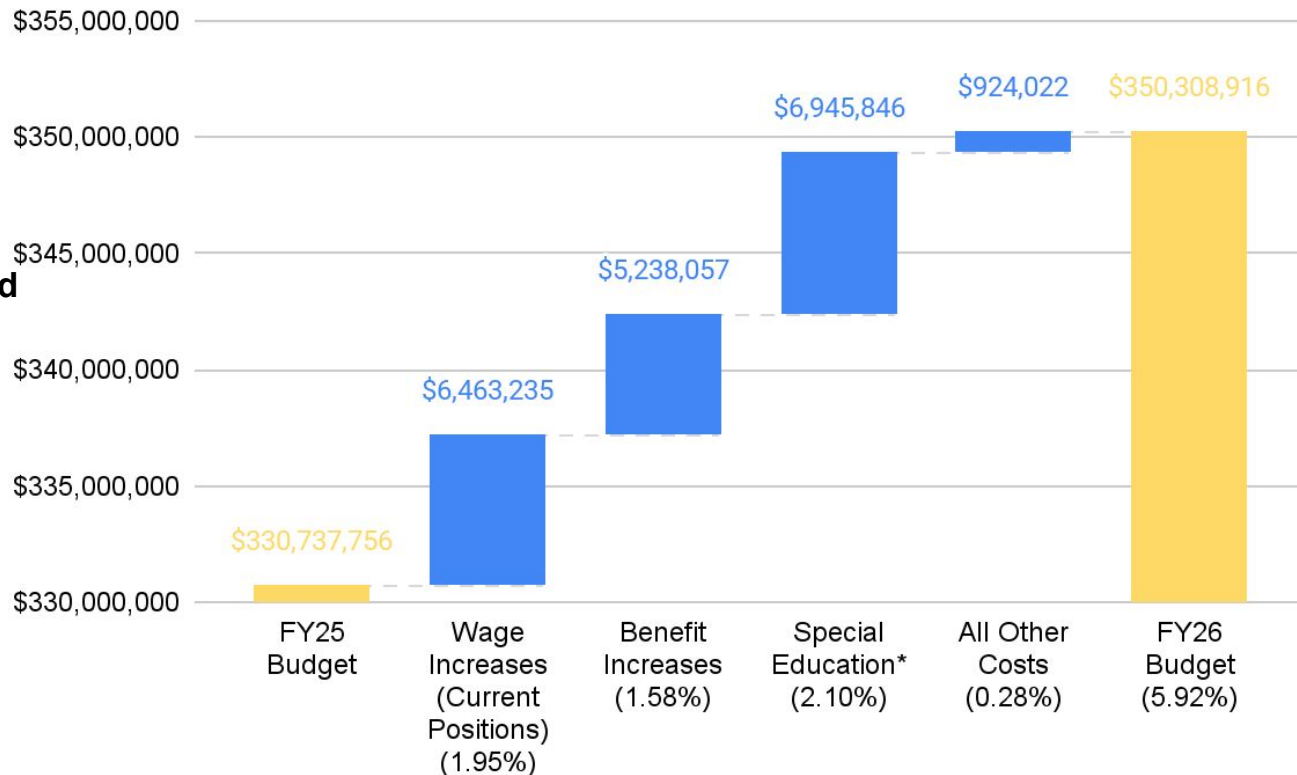
Stamford Board of Education FY26 Budget Summary

- Status quo budget:**

Net FTE reduction, no new programs

- 95% of the requested increase can be explained by:**

- Collectively bargained wage increases
- Healthcare/benefit costs
- Certain mandated Special Education costs



*Out of District Tuition, Board, Special Education Transportation

2025-26 *Operating* Budget Request

2024-25 Operating Budget	\$330,737,756
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2025-26 Operating Budget	\$350,308,916
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Change	5.92%
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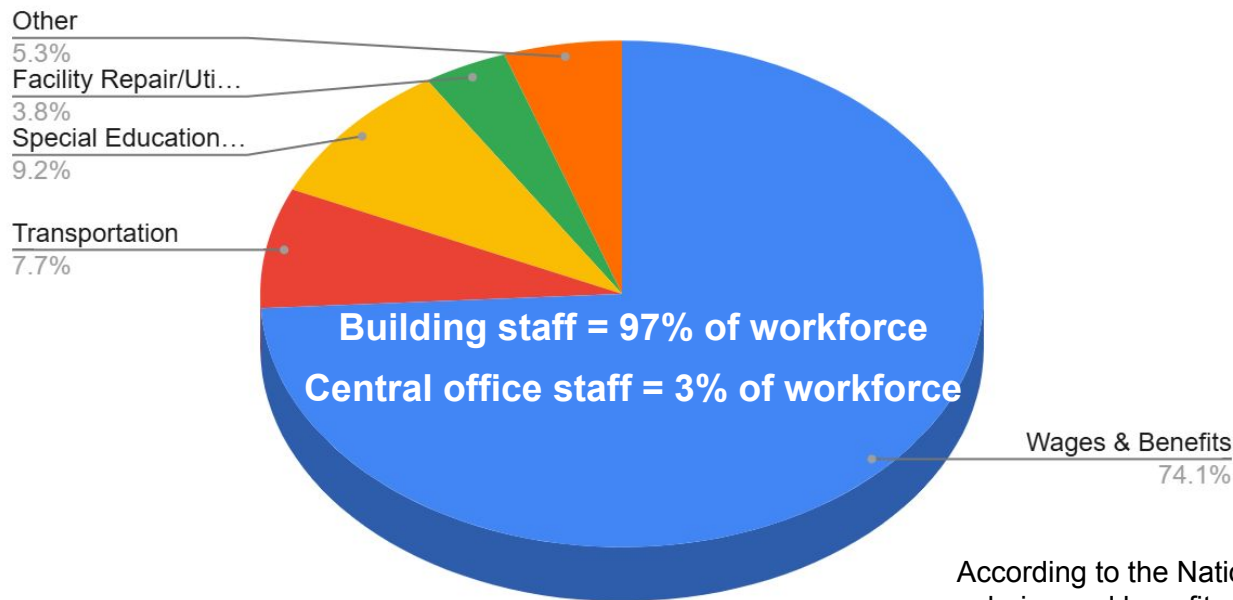
2025-26 *Total* Budget (Operating + Grants)

2024-25 Total Budget	\$386,249,250
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2025-26 Total Budget	\$399,858,311
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Change	3.52%
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FY26 Budget (All Funding Sources)



Other Category (5.3%) includes ALL of the following:

- Classroom Supplies
- Classroom and Office Furniture
- Textbooks/Workbooks
- Athletic Equipment
- Staff Professional Development
- Districtwide Internet Connection
- Districtwide Software
- Instructional Technology
- Property & GL Insurance
- Telephone Costs
- Postage Costs
- Districtwide Copiers
- Dues & Fees

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, salaries and benefits comprise approximately 80 percent of public-school expenditures in the U.S.

Fixed costs account for more than 90% of the budget:

- Wages & Benefits
- Special Education
- Transportation

Operating Budget by Major Object

Object Number & Description	2024-25	2025-26	Variance	Variance %	FY 26 Budget Impact	Notes
100 Salaries and Wages	\$194,516,598	\$202,041,271	\$7,524,673	3.87%	2.28%	Collectively bargained wage increases, higher wages for substitutes
200 Employee Benefits	\$50,750,623	\$55,988,680	\$5,238,057	10.32%	1.58%	Premium increase of 11% offset by use of \$500k from reserve; estimated pension increases
300 Educational, Rehabilitative, and Legal Services	\$13,550,153	\$13,622,999	\$72,846	0.54%	0.02%	
400 Building Upkeep and Repair	\$10,106,966	\$10,611,299	\$504,333	4.99%	0.15%	\$560k increase in electricity costs; \$300k building maintenance costs to be borne by Building Use Fund
500 Transportation, Out-District Tuition, & Other Svcs	\$50,950,591	\$57,751,877	\$6,801,286	13.35%	2.06%	\$2.3m increase in transportation costs; \$2.9m increase in Special Ed Out of District Tuition incl. use of \$250k carryover grant; \$1.25m for lunch
600 Supplies, Materials, and Heating Fuels	\$9,652,725	\$9,176,949	(\$475,776)	(4.93%)	(0.14%)	Decrease in supply budget, heating costs
700 Equipment	\$1,033,034	\$928,818	(\$104,216)	(10.09%)	(0.03%)	\$200k reduction to building security hardware budget line
800 Dues and Fees	\$177,066	\$187,023	\$9,957	5.62%	0.00%	
Sum	\$330,737,756	\$350,308,916	\$19,571,160	5.92%	5.92%	

Net Reduction in FTE

Object	Description	Change in FTE (Operating)	Change in FTE (Grants)	Change in FTE (Net)	Summary*
510101	Educators (Certified)	(17.0)	(1.3)	(18.3)	(15.0) K-5 due to projected enrollment (class sizes remain within target ranges); (6.0) Special Education per staffing analysis; (2.5) IEP Compliance; (2.1) MS Specialists (enrollment); +2.0 AITE teachers; +4.6 contingencies
510102	Administrators (Certified)	7.0	1.0	8.0	8.0 Special Education Administrators per staffing analysis; 1.0 FTE from Operating to Grants
510103	Teacher Support	4.8	0.0	4.8	2.0 Social Workers; 2.8 School Psychologists
510112	Administrators (Non-Certified Discretionary)	1.0	0.0	1.0	4.0 BCBA, (3.0) Teacher Residents
510114	Clerical/Technical	(2.0)	0.0	(2.0)	Reduction per staffing analysis
510115	Paraeducators	5.0	0.0	5.0	Kindergarten Paraeducators due to increase in K classrooms
Sum		(1.2)	(0.3)	(1.5)	

*For a comprehensive list, please see Section 5 of the Budget Book.

Average K-5 Class Sizes

	K	1	2	3	4	5
2024-25 (Actual)	18.6	19.9	20.8	19.8	21.4	21.9
2025-26 (Projected)	20.4	20.3	20.7	21.5	22.2	22.1

Per the BOE contract with the SEA: “In grades K-5 the class size shall not exceed 25 pupils, and any special education or bi-lingual pupils not present a full school day. If the class size exceeds 25, the Board shall employ an educational assistant. Class size may also be reduced through the addition of professional staff, physical expansion and/or portable classrooms.”

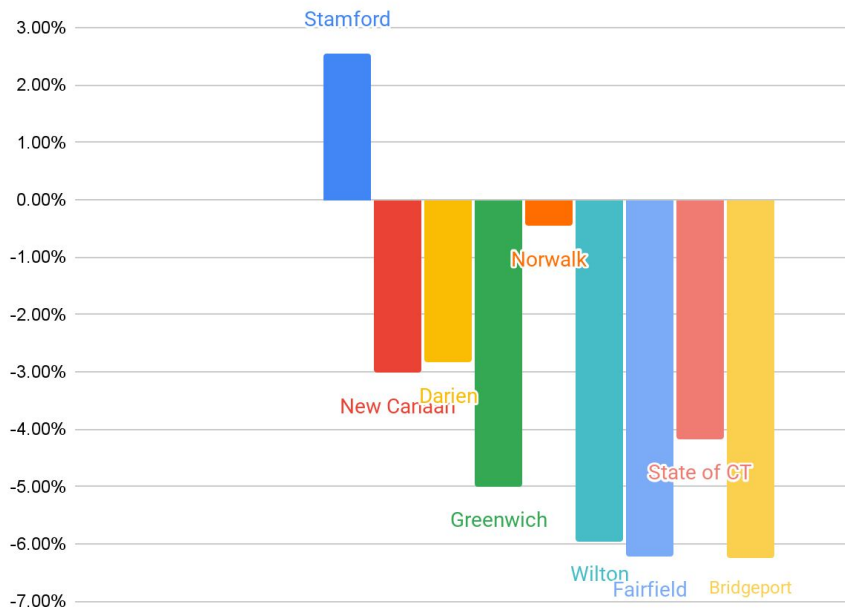
Enrollment Trends

From 2017-18 through 2023- 24:

- SPS enrollment grew by nearly 3%, while enrollment statewide and in many local districts decreased.
- Non-public school enrollment of Stamford residents declined by more than 7%.
- SPS enrollment declined in Elementary School, but increased in both Middle School and High School.

Public School Enrollment Growth 2017-2024

Data per CT EdSight



Source: EdSight: https://public-edsight.ct.gov/Students/Enrollment-Dashboard/Enrollment-Report-Legacy?language=en_US

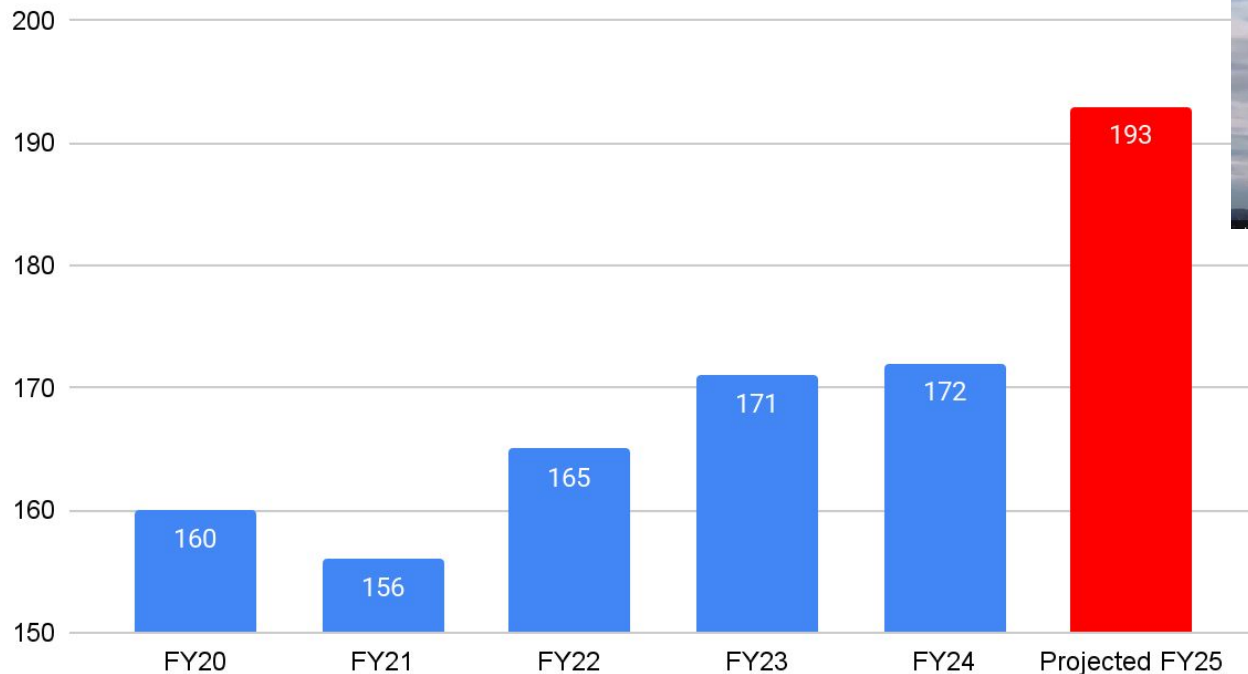
Increased Health Insurance Premiums

- The State Partnership Plan (SPP) is projecting a 10-12% increase.
- The FY26 operating budget originally included an **8%** increase in premiums, updated to **11%** by the BOE based on the January estimate by the SPP.
- A 1% movement in premiums has approximately a **\$470,000** effect on the budget.
- Analysis by healthcare industry consultant continues to show multi-million dollar net savings with SPP vs. a high-deductible alternative. This is based on an analysis of claim data and likely costs for Stop Loss coverage, an HSA, and Administrative expenses.

Fiscal Year	SPP Projected Increase (December 2024)	Actual Increase
2022	9-11%	4.2%
2023	8%	10.5%
2024	9-12%	7.2%
2025	4-7%	2%
2026	10-12%	TBD

Out of District Placements

Number of Out of District Placements: An Unprecedented Increase in FY25

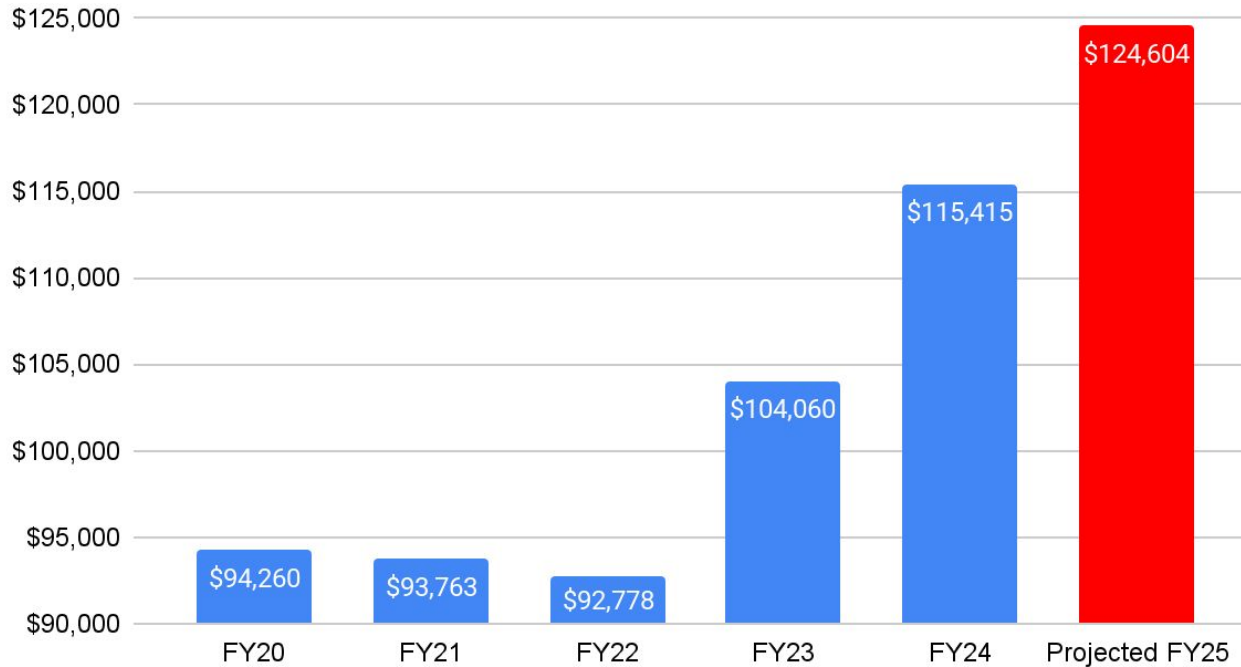


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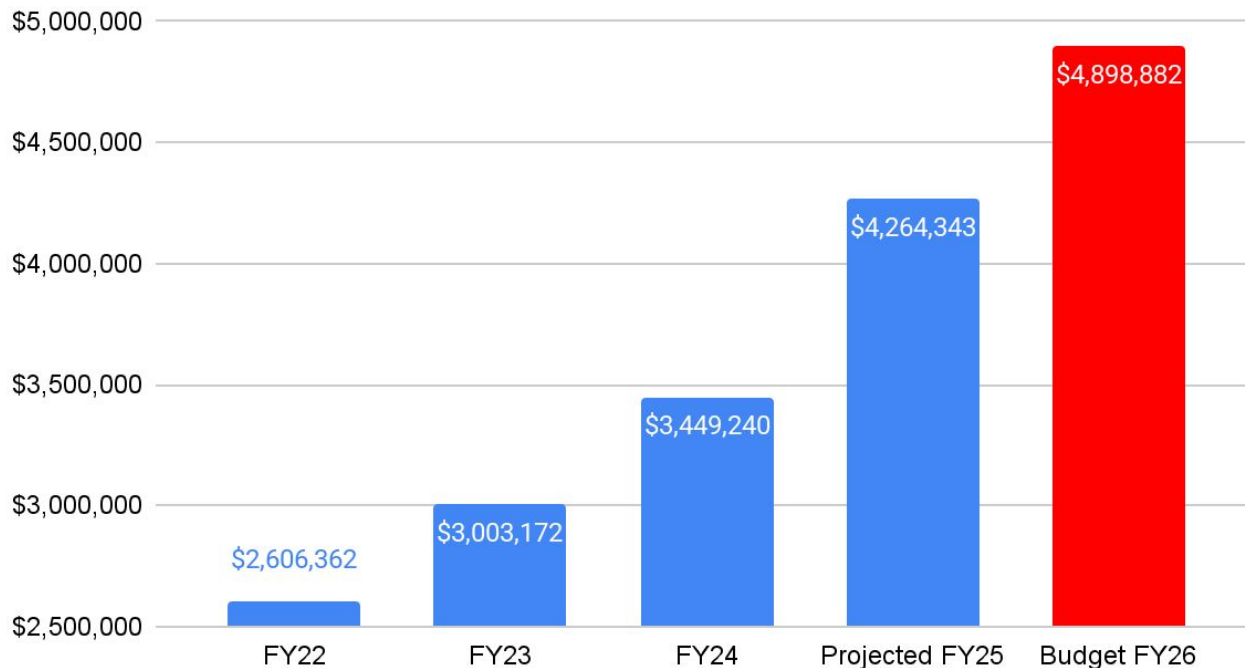
Out of District Tuition: Increase in Cost of Placements

Average Cost of Placements: 34% Increase Over 3 Years



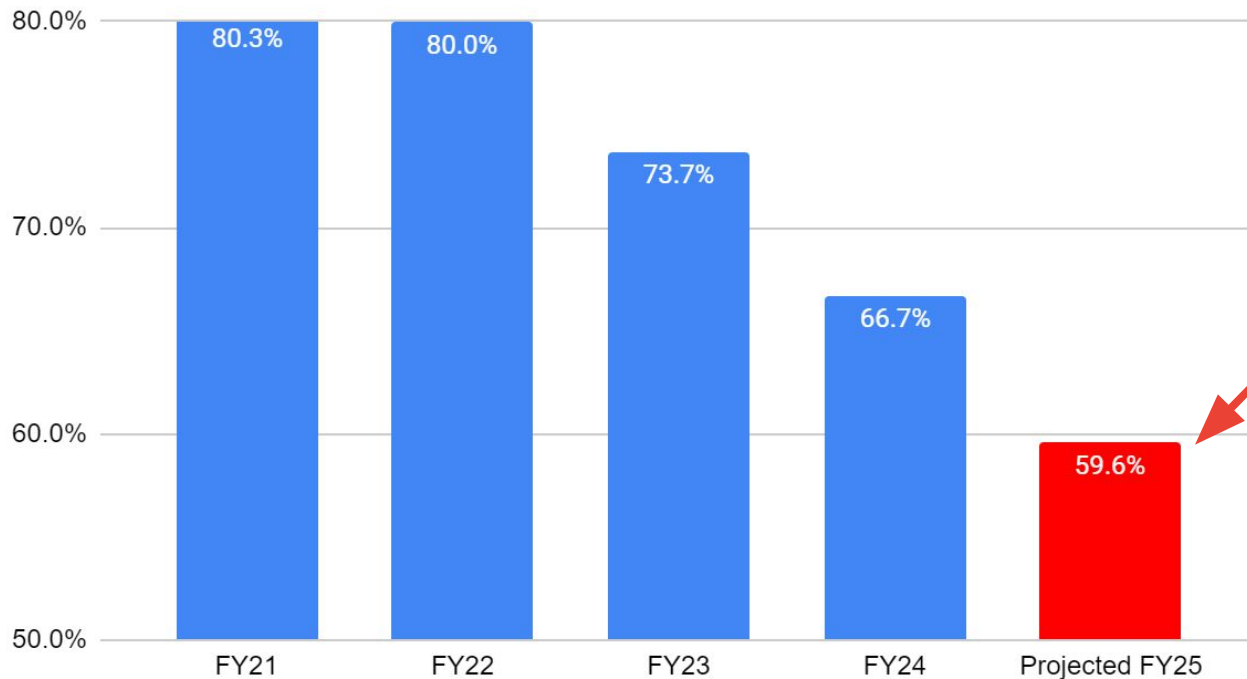
Out of District Tuition: Transportation

Out of District Transportation Costs: 63% Increase Over 3 Years



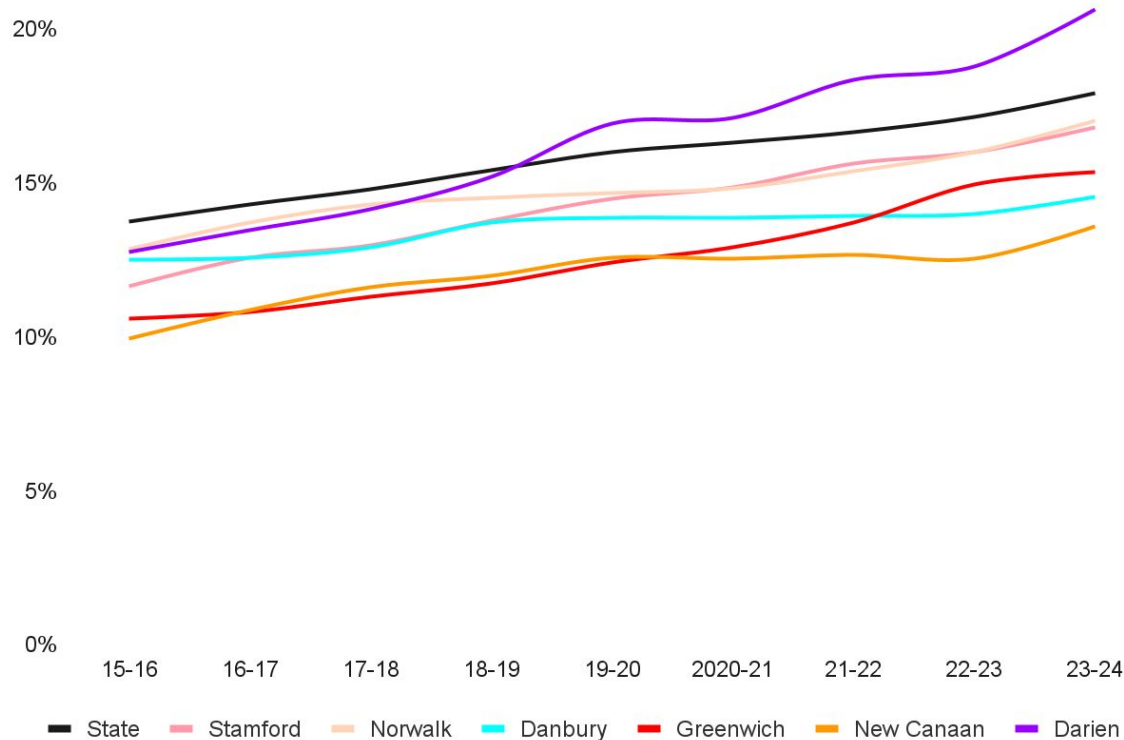
Out of District Tuition: Decrease in State Aid

State Reimbursement: A Precipitous Decline



Creates a \$3M funding deficit compared to state law; deficit will be covered by Stamford taxpayers

Increase in Students with Special Needs



Students with Special Needs as Percent of Enrollment

	DRG	2015-16	2023-24
Statewide		13.75%	17.92%
Darien	A	12.76%	20.64%
Norwalk	H	12.85%	17.01%
Stamford	H	11.66%	16.82%
Greenwich	B	10.61%	15.36%
Danbury	H	12.52%	14.54%
New Canaan	A	9.94%	13.60%

District Snapshot: Spending Comparison

Rank	District	DRG	Enrollment*	NCEP 2023-24
1	Redding	A	1,198	\$28,976
2	Greenwich	B	8,333	\$27,670
3	Weston	A	2,127	\$27,096
4	Sherman	C	359	\$26,972
5	Westport	A	5,303	\$26,652
6	Darien	A	4,634	\$25,494
7	Ridgefield	A	4,472	\$24,822
8	New Canaan	A	4,152	\$24,477
9	Easton	A	1,281	\$24,431
10	Wilton	A	3,751	\$23,757
11	Fairfield	B	9,314	\$23,635
12	New Fairfield	C	2,093	\$21,806
13	Stamford	H	15,978	\$21,788

Rank	District	DRG	Enrollment*	NCEP 2023-24
14	Norwalk	H	11,855	\$21,615
15	Newtown	B	3,992	\$21,607
16	Brookfield	B	2,605	\$19,832
17	Stratford	G	6,909	\$19,645
18	Trumbull	B	6,785	\$19,316
19	Monroe	B	3,497	\$18,863
20	Bethel	D	3,218	\$17,972
21	Shelton	D	4,644	\$17,717
22	Bridgeport	I	19,365	\$16,630
23	Danbury	H	11,996	\$15,666
Average			5,994	\$22,454

Source: Connecticut State Department of Education Bureau of Fiscal Services

*Average Daily Membership 2023-24

SPS Expenditures vs. State Average

Compared to state average, SPS spends **MORE** on instruction and **LESS** on central office

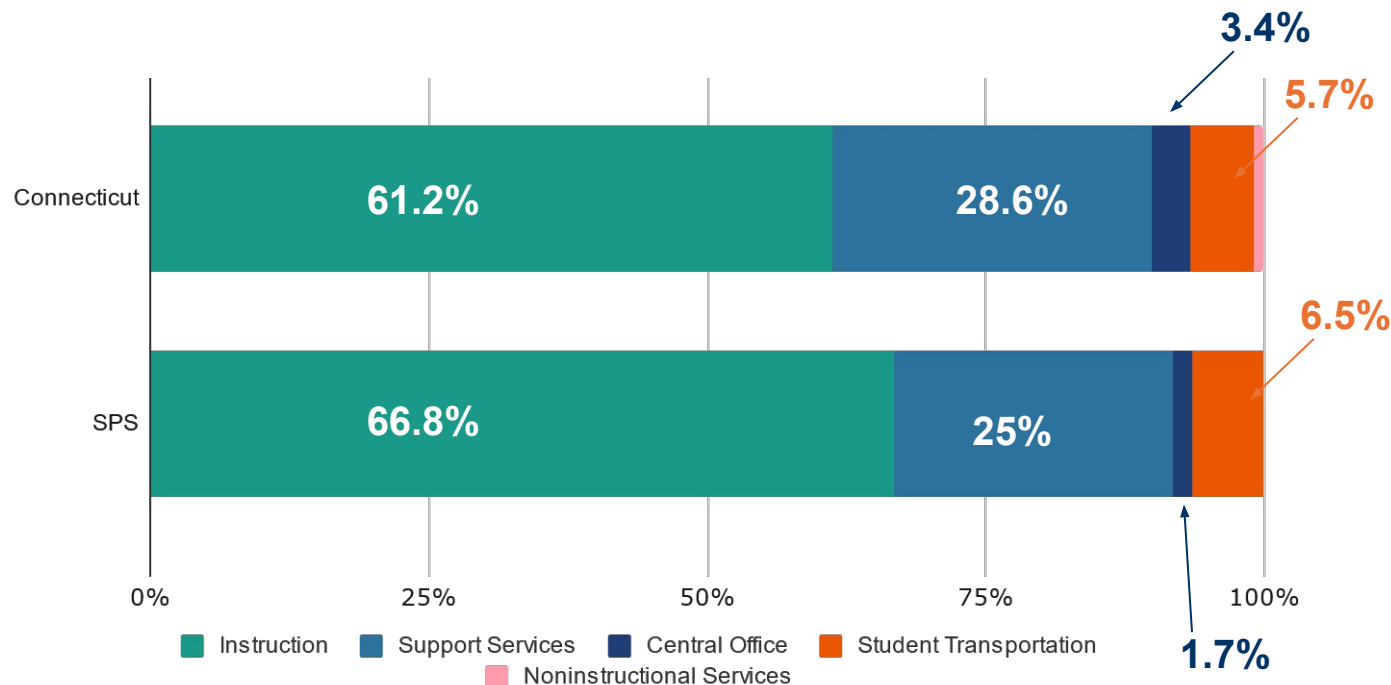


Chart courtesy of [School + State Finance Project](#). Source: Connecticut State Department of Education. (2024). EdSight - Fiscal Resources: Per Pupil Expenditures by Function (District), 2022-23. Retrieved from <https://public-edsight.ct.gov/overview/per-pupil-expenditures-by-function---district>.

Transportation

- FY26 is Year 2 of a 3-year contract for in-district transportation services that contains annual increases of **9.75%**, **5.5%**, and **5.5%**.
- The cost for school transportation services has been increasing significantly statewide due to a tight labor market for drivers, but Stamford is in a uniquely disadvantageous position.
- Stamford's current vendor owns the bus depot which houses the fleet, dispatch, and mechanical service operations. Without land of our own to offer a competing vendor, it is very difficult to competitively bid this service.
- SPS has been working with the city Operations Department to source potential sites for this purpose, but there are many constraints.
- If a site is not secured by **Fall 2025**, it is very likely that the next contract renewal will take place under the same conditions as the last one.

State Grant Funding Comparison

District	FY24 Enrollment	High-Needs %	High-Needs Students	ECS Funding FY24	ECS Funding/Student	ECS Funding/High-Needs Student
Hartford	16,839	85.8%	14,446	\$215,966,982.00	\$12,825	\$14,950
Bridgeport	19,591	91.5%	17,932	\$192,456,851.00	\$9,824	\$10,733
New Haven	18,966	83.5%	15,833	\$165,306,789.00	\$8,716	\$10,441
Waterbury	18,956	87.2%	16,520	\$171,892,005.00	\$9,068	\$10,405
Meriden	8,789	84.5%	7,422	\$71,875,826.00	\$8,178	\$9,684
Danbury	12,126	72.5%	8,786	\$45,682,808.00	\$3,767	\$5,199
Norwalk	11,520	65.8%	7,576	\$14,269,949.00	\$1,239	\$1,884
Stamford	16,339	64.8%	10,591	\$17,145,212.00	\$1,049	\$1,619

Source: https://public-edsight.ct.gov/Students/Enrollment-Dashboard?language=en_US

<https://schoolstatefinance.org/issues/current-year-funding>

Fiscal Operations: Grants

SPS applied for **38 grants** and received a total of **\$194,107,416** in 2023-24

- **\$188,253,038 support facilities projects** at a 60% reimbursement rate
- \$14.3M Stark Asset Renewal application is still pending (60% reimbursement rate)
- Application conversion rate **exceeds 80%**.

After School Grant - ALTA

After School Grant - TOR

ARP After School Grant - Scofield

Dalio Innovation - WHS (2023 + 2024)

Ed Rising Mini Grant (2023 + 2024)

CT Stronger Connections Grant

ARP Summer Mental Health Supports

21st CCLC Grants - KTM and Toquam

ARPA Right to Read

FAFSA Challenge

NSL Program - School Food Equipment

Dual Credit Expansion Program Grant
(Stamford High and Westhill)

School Security Grant (Multimedia)

School Security Grant (SSCGP)

Teacher Residency Program additional funding

Eversource Rebates

The South Schools (Upper and Lower)

IAQ Grants - Rippowam & Newfield

SHS 1927 Building Roof Replacement

Davenport Roof Replacement

Davenport Abatement and Restrooms

Springdale Energy Efficiency Project

Springdale Flooring Replacement

Northeast Flooring Abatement

Newfield Roof Replacement

SHS Baseball Field

Stark Asset Renewal

Westover NRES Grant Solar

Rogers NRES Grant Solar

Strawberry Hill NRES Grant Solar

SHS NRES Solar Grant