

ANNUAL



BUDGET

APPENDICES

Frequently Asked Budget Questions

Q. How does the 2011-2012 budget request compare to last year's budget?

A. The school district has requested a 1.27% budget increase, which is \$569,313 more than the 2010-2011 operating budget of \$44,697,024, for a total request of \$45,266,337.

Q. Has the school district been able to save money, avoid costs, and work more efficiently to preserve the educational program in the current budget?

A. Yes, here is a list of the savings:

Health Benefits:

- 1st Year (2010-11) saving from transitioning 169 employees to HSA \$338,497
- 2nd Year (2011-12) saving from transitioning 169 employees to HSA 491,831
- Transition an additional 25 employees to the H.S.A. Plan in FY 2012 72,756
- Increased employee cost share 54,837

Transportation:

- Savings from creating a mini-fleet for in-district special needs 53,436

Energy:

- Bid and locked in natural gas/oil rates 77,465
- Exceeded budget goal for Energy Education savings in FY 2011 145,945

Facilities:

- Recruited highly qualified mechanics for vacancies vs. contracting out 77,150
- Transition maintenance of athletic fields to the schools 20,195

Technology:

- Transition email system to in-house 14,749
- Renegotiated full-service contract for printers 16,550
- Automate sub-calling system 16,192

Total **\$1,379,603**

Q. What would the budget increase be, if we did not have these savings?

A. The 2011-2012 budget request would have been 3.08% higher or reflect a 4.35% increase.

Q. What is the Projected Enrollment for the 2011-2012 School Year?

A. We based our budget on an enrollment of 2,511 students. This projection is 38 students less than 2010-2011, which are spread over thirteen grade levels.

Q. What data and needs drive the budget development process?

A. Prior to the budget preparation process, the Board of Education develops budget assumptions, which guide how the budget is developed. These assumptions are outlined in the "Introduction" section of the budget document on pages 8, 9 and 10. The school district's budget provides resources to support Board of Education policies, and federal and state mandates. A few examples include providing an educational program for our students with special needs, allocating resources for requirements in the No Child Left Behind legislation, and maintaining a home-to-school transportation system for our students. Employee and vendor contracts are used to calculate budget requests wherever possible. For needs that require estimates, the school district uses historical data and researches current costs to provide the best possible budget projections. The following is a list of the 2011-2012 budget drivers:

- *Grade by grade enrollment projections*
- *Allocate staffing based on enrollment*
- *Allocate special education staffing based on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) which identify mandated services*
- *Allocate funds for out-of-district education expenses for students with special needs*
- *Examine alternative staffing levels (DRG A and Tri-State comparisons)*
- *Reorganize and improve productivity*
- *Account for all state and federal mandates*
- *Allocate funds for instructional materials (enrollment, program needs, examine 3-5 year spending patterns)*
- *Allocate funds for basic maintenance and grounds care (prioritize and examine 3-5 year spending patterns)*
- *Allocate funds for contracted services (transportation, energy, cleaning)*
- *Allocate for equipment and technology needs (age, condition, priorities)*
- *Prioritize instructional improvement and maintenance projects*
- *Assess the need for all stipend positions*
- *Research outsourcing opportunities where it is cost effective*
- *Partner with the Town of Weston for joint arrangements*
- *Engage in competitive bidding (materials, services, energy)*
- *Restructure services (energy, SPED transportation)*
- *Revisions in collective bargaining contracts (health benefits, cost sharing)*
- *Spend wisely---Maximize every dollar!*

What will the Elementary School program look like next year for students?

- A. For the 2011-2012 school year, Hurlbutt will have 28 fewer students. The Hurlbutt budget is based on the needs of our students, and is driven by our enrollment, curriculum implementation, and the school improvement plan and intervention programs. Our budget request for the 2011-2012 school year continues to balance our commitment to continuous improvement with fiscal responsibility. Smaller class sizes at the primary level have a long-term, positive impact on student achievement in the areas of reading and math. Smaller class sizes also maximize teacher-student contact time and allow for more frequent meetings with guided reading and math groups as well as increased one-to-one conferencing time. Additionally, smaller class sizes enable our professional educators to ensure that all students meet grade-level expectations and receive necessary early intervention.*

Hurlbutt's budget also seeks to slightly increase our current level of support services for students' academic, social and emotional needs. With a .1 increase to our current math support teacher, we would be able to deliver intervention within the classroom setting more consistently.

Q. What will the Intermediate School program look like for students next year?

- A. This budget proposal continues to support our highest priority needs, which include advanced literacy training in reader's and writer's workshop for all teachers including special education teachers, state mandated SRBI services, curriculum revision for science, the implementation of Performance Based Assessments, the development of 21st century skills in all curricular areas, Smart Board hardware in special education classrooms, and continuous improvement of academic and social services to our students and their families.*

Our most significant cost containment will be class sizes in the mid-range of the Board of Education's guidelines. We will be decreasing two sections of fourth grade to accommodate the enrollment decrease. The net decrease of two classroom sections and concomitant reduction in FTE for special areas will result in a decrease of 2.28 FTE.

Additionally, we seek to add .1 FTE to the math enrichment position. This increase will help us meet further demands in the area of SRBI math services. Thus, in terms of overall staffing for WIS for the 2011-2012 school years, we will be decreasing by 2.18 FTE.

Q. What will the Middle School program look like for students next year?

- A. *Weston Middle school remains steadfast in its commitment to provide students with an exemplary middle school education. Achieving mastery in the core areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science is no longer sufficient to prepare students for the increasing demands of the global, knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. Understanding the need to provide students with updated skills to be successful, we are dedicated to fostering our students' abilities to think critically, problem solve, and work in teams to apply their knowledge to real world situations. A primary focus of the middle school is to embed performance-based learning opportunities across curricular areas to promote the development of these skills. Our professional development and common meeting time is critical in supporting the work ahead of us to achieve this goal.*

Middle level research supports a commitment to performance-based learning and a student-centered approach to teaching. Our teachers are committed to empowering students to become successful through dynamic, differentiated and authentic learning experiences. This approach places the students at the center of instruction and requires them to be active learners. The middle school curriculum instructional leaders and administrators are regularly in classrooms to observe student learning and provide teachers with essential feedback and coaching to support a student-centered focus.

The proposed budget supports this mission and maintains the commitment to the middle school teaming philosophy that establishes smaller learning communities within the school. Our exemplary teaming model consisting of two teams at each grade levels supports the intellectual, developmental and social/emotional needs of the young adolescent. We have a projected enrollment for the 2011-12 school year of 645 students, which represents an increase of 36 students from the current budget. The most significant change in enrollment will be in our eighth grade with an anticipated increase of 39 students. We are requesting additional staffing in order to support this increased enrollment. The proposed middle school budget is informed by these enrollment projections and by school and district initiatives that guide our continuous improvement process.

In previous years, we implemented a variety of cost-savings strategies, including making reductions in staffing and extracurricular stipends, as well as seeking alternative sources of funding for some technology needs. With our enrollment increasing next year, our primary cost-containment strategy will be class sizes within the Board of Education guidelines. We are recommending a reorganization of the practical and fine arts offerings to strengthen the program of study and more efficiently utilize our staffing resources. Each line item in the pages that follow has once again been carefully reviewed to produce a responsible budget that continues to move the school forward in its mission to provide an exemplary middle school experience for the Weston community.

Q. What will the High School program look like for students next year?

- A. The high school budget reflects a reduction of 1.1 staff. We believe our proposed staffing levels are critical to maintain our exemplary academic and co-curricular program. WHS offers a comprehensive program of studies, which includes 15 Advanced Placement (AP) courses representing a variety of disciplines as well as required and elective offerings that provide our students with opportunities to develop and hone critical skills needed to be successful in life after high school. The Weston community is proud of its commitment to our students that they will be prepared for opportunities of higher learning at the colleges of their choice. In order to uphold this promise, it is essential that our staffing be developed in the most financially efficient manner.*

The 2011-12 school year reflects one new course offering, which is the third course in the sequence of our Project Lead the Way technology program. This new course will not require additional staffing but rather will be offered by reconfiguring existing staff assignments.

Q. Why is it important to maintain Interscholastic Sports Program and Extra-Curricular programs?

- A. The extra-curricula program is a critical component to our student's experience. Weston Schools have a wide array of programs including Interscholastic sports, clubs, student government, intramurals and theater in which our students participate. It is through this program that students develop independence, confidence, and a sense of responsibility. They learn to work collaboratively and involve themselves in community service projects. Their participation serves them well as they prepare for life beyond Weston.*

Q. Do you have money in the budget to improve the educational program?

- A. The budget includes funding to improve targeted areas within the educational program. Improvement initiatives are guided by the curriculum renewal cycle, which staggers the renewal of each of our academic programs over a five year period. This cycle also enables the district to plan appropriately for the purchase of new resources to implement program improvements. During the 2011-2012 school year, revised curriculum in the area of K-12 Science will be developed. The instructional improvement budget includes resources to support this work. In addition, the second phase of the newly adopted Physical Education curriculum (Project Adventure), and the third phase of the Weston High School technology program, Project Lead the Way, are supported in this fiscal plan. Modest enhancements to the middle school technology program are also initiated through support in this budget. Finally, this budget funds the third and final phase of a*

three year purchase plan for resources for the K-12 World Language curriculum revisions.

Q. Why is the budget organized by program into Cost Centers?

A. The program budgets or “Cost Centers” mirror the school district’s organizational structure. This structure is a reflection of how the school district allocates its resources and controls its expenditures. There are no duplications between program budgets. Therefore, budgeted expenditures in one program budget will not appear in another program budget. There are six “Academic and Student Activities Program Budgets” and there are six “Service Program Budgets that Support the Academic & Student Activities Programs.”

- *Academic & Student Activities Program Budgets:*
 - *Hurlbutt Elementary School (does not include Pre-K)*
 - *Weston Intermediate School*
 - *Weston Middle School*
 - *Weston High School*
 - *Athletics*
 - *Special Education (includes Pre-K and out-placed students)*

Include the following:

- *Art Instruction (schools)*
- *Classroom Instruction (HES/WIS only: Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies)*
- *Computer Instruction (HES, WIS, WMS only: direct instruction to students)*
- *English (WMS/WHIS only)*
- *Family & Consumer Science (WMS)*
- *Interscholastic Sports (Athletics only)*
- *Library & Media Services (schools)*
- *Math (WMS/WHIS only: Classroom instruction)*
- *Math Enrichment (in addition to classroom instruction)*
- *Music Instruction (schools)*
- *Out Placements (SPED only)*
- *Physical & Health Education Instruction (schools)*
- *Pre-School (SPED only)*
- *Reading Support (in addition to classroom instruction)*
- *Administration*
- *School/Program Wide Expenses (postage, printing, paper, etc.)*
- *Science (WMS/WHIS only)*
- *Special Education (SPED only)*
- *Speech & Hearing (SPED only)*
- *Student Activities (schools)*
- *Talented & Gifted (SPED only)*

- *Technology Education (WMS/WHS only)*
 - *World Language (schools)*
- *Service Program Budgets that Support the Academic & Student Activities Programs:*
 - *Pupil Personnel Services*
 - *Guidance & Counseling Services*
 - *Psychological Services*
 - *English for Non-English Speakers Services*
 - *Occupational & Physical Therapy Services*
 - *Health/Nursing Services*
 - *Curriculum & Instructional Improvement*
 - *K – 12 Curriculum & Instruction Articulation*
 - *Content Area Leadership*
 - *Professional Development*
 - *New Teacher Orientation*
 - *Citizenship Courses*
 - *Technology Services (Student & Administrative: All but direct instructional program)*
 - *Technology Integrators*
 - *Network Administrative Services*
 - *Software Acquisition and Maintenance Services*
 - *Hardware Acquisition Maintenance Services*
 - *Communication Services*
 - *Record Retention and Archiving*
 - *District Administrative Services*
 - *Superintendent of Schools*
 - *Human Resource Services*
 - *Business Services*
 - *Payroll & Employee Benefits*
 - *Purchasing & Accounts Payables*
 - *Building Use Management & Accounts Receivables*
 - *Food Services*
 - *Facilities Services*
 - *Operations & Custodial Services*
 - *Maintenance Services*
 - *Safety & Security Services*
 - *District Wide Services*
 - *Transportation Services*
 - *Employee Benefits*

- *Liability Insurances*
- *Duplication/Mail Center*
- *Salary Allowances/Turnover Savings*

Q. Who develops the budget?

A. The Administrator responsible for the Program/Cost Center Budget collaborates with the staff within their schools or cost centers, curriculum and instructional leaders, administrators for the other schools and the district level. After careful review and evaluation of the program needs, the Administrator prepares a budget request for review by the entire Administrative Team.

Q. How does the administrative team determine what to present to the Board of Education?

A. The administrators meet for three days in the month of December to share and justify their budget requests with their peers. The team functions as a collaborative group of critical friends. They share best practices, ask probing questions, and ultimately develop a well thought out financial plan that supports the educational program that the community expects. The fundamental goal in this process is to maximize every dollar.

Q. We often hear that our budget is driven by salaries and employee benefits. This is true. What are the general wage increases for employee contracts?

*A. Weston Administrator's Association (1st year of 3-year contract): 1.75%
Weston Teachers' Association: (3rd year of 3-year contract): 2.75%
Non-Certified Staff – AFSCME: (3rd year of 3-year contract): 2.00%*

In addition, there are salary ranges for most employee groups. Generally, when these employees are hired they are not paid at the top of the range. Therefore, each year these employees move a step closer to the maximum salary, and this is referred to as a step increase. Step increases are in addition to the general wage increases and total \$481,551.

Q. Can the Board of Education require all employees to change to a high deductible Health Savings Account (H.S.A.) to save the school district and local taxpayers' money?

A. No, the Board of Education cannot require employees and retirees to enroll in the H.S.A. health benefits program because these terms are a product of collective bargaining. However, the school administration aggressively markets the

program because it is financially beneficial for the school district and reduces the overall cost of health coverage for most employees. In FY 2011, the district successfully transitioned 169 employees from the PPO to the HSA health benefits plan. The projected combined savings for FY's 2011 and 2012 is \$830,328.

How does the pension system work? How much does the district contribute?

- A. The school district does not fund any portion of the pension for employees that qualify for the State Teachers' Retirement Benefit (STRB). All teachers and most administrators qualify for this benefit. Teachers contribute 7.25% of their salary for this benefit, with the State of Connecticut funding the balance. The district's non-certified employees are covered by the Municipal Employee Retirement System (MERS), which is administered by the State of Connecticut. Contributions to this fund are based on gross salaries, with the employees contributing 2.25% and the school district funding 9.5% for 2010-2011 and 11.56% for 2011-2012.*

Q. What other areas of the budget increased & why?

- A. Special Education: Increased needs based on the Individualized Educational Plan of our students, and a decrease in financial support by the State of CT for the educational program of our students that exceed 4.5 times the regular per pupil cost.*

Technology Replacement: The 2011-2012 budget includes the second phase of replacing this equipment. Please refer to the Technology Cost Center budget for more details, and learn more about the innovative approaches that the district has developed to get at this very important need.

Special Projects: There are a few projects in the Facilities Cost Center that improve building security, preserve existing resources and replace very tired fixtures at Hurlbutt Elementary School, Weston Middle School and Weston High School.

Furniture Replacement: The budget includes a classroom furniture replacement plan for Hurlbutt Elementary School and Weston Middle School. Most of the furniture in these schools is 30 years and older, and beyond repair.

Q. How has the projected reduction in state aid for Excess Cost impacted your budget?

- A. The Excess Cost grant reduces actual expenditures for students with educational programs that cost more than 4.5 times the regular per pupil expenditure as a direct credit to the Board of Education's operating budget. When comparing*

current year budget to FY 2011 budget, the grant is projected to decrease by \$60,992. This represents an automatic increase in our budget of .14%.

Q. What do school administrators do?

- A. Education administrators hold leadership positions with significant responsibility and provide instructional leadership as well as manage the day-to-day activities in each of our schools. Administrators set educational standards and goals and establish procedures to attain them. They supervise and evaluate teachers, librarians, guidance counselors, paraprofessionals, secretaries, coaches, and others. Administrators develop academic programs; monitor students' educational progress; train and motivate teachers and other staff; manage guidance and other student services including special education; prepare budgets; handle relations with parents, prospective and current students, and the community; and perform many other duties.*

Education administrators set the academic tone and hire, evaluate, and help improve the skills of teachers and other staff. They regularly visit classrooms, observe teaching methods, review instructional practices, and examine learning materials. They actively work with teachers to develop and maintain high curriculum standards, and set performance goals.

The ability to make sound decisions and to organize and coordinate work efficiently is essential. Since much of an administrator's job involves interacting with others---such as students, parents, teachers, and the community---a person in such a position must have strong interpersonal skills and be an effective communicator and motivator. Knowledge of leadership principles and practices, gained through work experience and formal education, is important. Research shows that leadership by the school administrator is key to a school's effectiveness in promoting student learning.

Q. How frequently are the schools used when school is not in session?

- A. In addition to the after-hours usage of our school buildings for school related events such as athletic, theatre, driver education, and other educational purposes, the schools are used by many community groups on nights and weekends. For example, the Park and Recreation Department offers many programs for all age groups that use the gyms in every school such as soccer, lacrosse, baseball and softball and, of course, basketball. In addition, many community groups use the school facilities including the Boys and Girls' Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts, Aspetuck Wildcats Cheerleaders, the Weston Woman's League, and Weston Youth Services. There are also many after-school and summer sports camps held in the schools, as well as the PTO Carnival. The Kiwanis Club spaghetti suppers are held here as well. The local public elections are held at the Middle School and the*

Middle School is the Community Shelter in the event of an emergency preparedness event. The athletic fields are also in constant use by many outside groups including the Park and Recreation programs and the Aspetuck Football program. The school buildings are typically in use Monday through Friday from after-school time until 9:00 pm and sometimes later. On Saturdays, the Intermediate School, Middle School and High Schools are in use and the High School is in use all day and into the late evening every Sunday.

Q. Where can I find an electronic version of the budget?

A. An electronic version of the budget can be found on our website at www.westonk12-ct.org