

Legislative Council
BOE: Topics & Commentary 4/2/2019

Purchasing Agent – Savings on “Supplies”

We anticipate that the purchasing agent will be helpful in obtaining competitive bids for the district for services.

For years, the district has been getting competitive pricing on supplies (custodial, office, and instructional) through several consortia. A consortium can obtain incredibly competitive rates because of the large quantities being purchased.

Custodial supplies have been purchased for both the town and schools through the district’s consortium membership. Instructional supplies, which may include science materials, print materials, educational games, etc., are often different from office supplies and are best purchased in consortia of educational institutions.

It is worth noting that each principal is allocated an amount of money based on the number of students they have. That way, we ensure that spending on each student is equitable. After the principal is given that allocation, they split it up, depending on the school’s needs, on office supplies, instructional supplies, travel, training, etc. We would not be able to apply a straight 20% reduction to each school's supply line item, because it would throw off the equity in spending per student.

For more specific examples of instructional versus office “supplies,” see the list attached to the memo regarding “Instructional and Office Supply Purchasing” dated 4/2/2019.

Director of Teaching and Learning – “How would curriculum be ready in time for the new school year?”

Curriculum development, review and revision occurs on a continuum over the course of several years and involves many people. The new Assistant Superintendent will work with the Director of Teaching and Learning, the Curriculum Committees, the Curriculum Council, the BOE Subcommittee of Curriculum and Instruction and the BOE to ensure that all curriculum is developed, reviewed, and revised with vertical and horizontal continuity among the grades and schools.

The Director of Teaching and Learning is focused on teaching and learning (namely instruction). He or she would be responsible for ensuring the “delivery” of services and

consistent, quality instruction takes place in every classroom. *The idea that curriculum would not be ready does not make much sense, as revised curriculum is always ready by the fall (as this is what is being taught every day from August on forward).* Having this critical position in place early on will finally provide the District with the necessary structures and oversight in place to support instructional improvements across the K-12 landscape. We continue to put off this position to support the District, and this now has become even more of a critical need given the number of mandates and responsibilities every District and administrator deals with in a given year.

Class Sizes - what if class sizes in kindergarten and 1st grade were 21 students per class?

In the budget, Kindergarten class sizes are smaller by design to address student needs and the prevailing research in this area.

First grade class sizes are consistent with past practice.

Enrollment in elementary schools is increasing, making the probability of underestimating staff FTE greater. As an example this year, Hawley kindergarten classes were split so that classes were 18 per class. They are now 21 per class as students who moved into the district since the fall increased class sizes larger than our guidelines. We have continued (last two years) to add Kindergarten teachers in the summer due to unexpected changes in enrollment, which makes it imperative we do not extend beyond what we believe is ideal or appropriate sizes for instruction. The teaching and learning environment is critical to learning (and achievement).

As we emphasized throughout the budget process and what is implied in our new class size policy, appropriate class sizes are not only about numbers. In one case this year, we kept a 3rd grade cohort smaller at Middle Gate due to the number of SPED and 504 students. This smaller class size will be maintained as 4th graders next year. We make decisions about class size around the population and their needs - often even more important than the number of students.

Administrators

We have reduced administrator positions when it was appropriate. For example, the Assistant Principal at Sandy Hook and the Director of Health and Wellness at Central Office were reductions in the past five years.

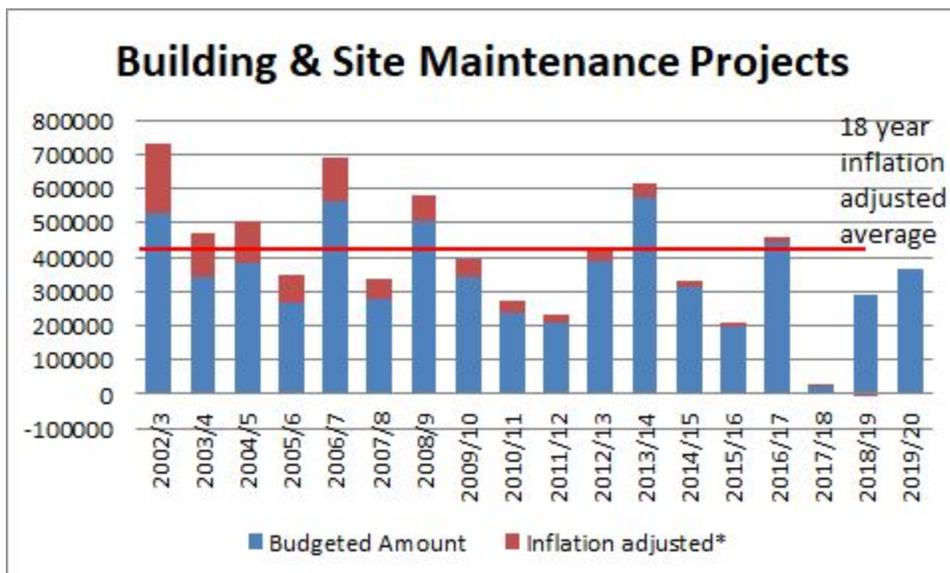
However, the demands on administrators are increasing overall. State reporting, mandates, student management, social/emotional learning and supports, as well as

teacher evaluations have contributed to the additional responsibilities that fall squarely on the shoulders of administrators. In addition, Common Core standards, NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards), and high stakes testing (e.g., Smarter Balanced, PSAT, SAT) have equally impacted the role of administrators. Reducing administrative staffing again would adversely impact our vision for school improvement.

We need to ensure that the decisions we make are sound and reasonable, not just places to reduce the budget. As a District that should be high achieving, our continued reductions in staffing, supervision, and oversight of programs and practices will ultimately have an adverse impact on improvements to teaching and learning.

Maintenance

The BOE recognizes that while the maintenance budget is the one that is frequently the first to be reduced and delayed, a long-term commitment to level spending is most prudent. Specific projects have been addressed in previous Q&A (dated 3/27/2019). The 18 year history is seen here.



The most recent five year average of \$253,888 is low relative to the 18 year inflation-adjusted average of \$405,232. The five year average includes one outlier year in which the budget was \$23,773. The 2019-20 budget includes \$363,700 for building and site maintenance. Any conversation about reducing the BOE budget based on the maintenance projects should take place in the context of a long term plan for level funding.

SPED Contingency

An education non-lapsing fund was created in 2014 with the BOF approval. The non-lapsing fund allows for educational funds to be designated for educational purposes and promotes good fiscal management by the BOE. Since the formation of the account, the BOE has requested funds from the non-lapsing fund for non-recurring expenses such as security equipment, a lightning protection system for SHS, and ductless-split air conditioning.

Given the unpredictable history of special education expenses, the BOE initiated a plan, using a similar education non-lapsing account, for self-insuring against unexpected SPED costs. By including a contingency line for SPED in the budget that, if not used, would be rolled into a non-lapsing account (similar to, but separate from the account mentioned above), the BOE can ensure that the district mitigates some of the instability in the operating budget and would eventually build a safety net. This is a long-term commitment, and will take years to achieve security. As can be seen by the SPED budget history, it would take eleven years of adequate SPED budgets to allow \$100K of the contingency line item to roll into the non-lapsing account (x11) and for it to be enough to cover the excess costs seen in SPED in 2015-16.

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Non-Lapsing Education Fund

The Newtown Board of Education (Board) may request the Town's Board of Finance deposit into a non-lapsing account any unexpended funds from the Board's prior fiscal year general operating budget, provided such amount does not exceed one percent (1%) of the total budgeted appropriation for education for such prior fiscal year pursuant to C.G.S. 10-248a.

Prior to any expenditure from the Non-Lapsing Education Fund the Board of Education shall vote to authorize such spending. The transfer of monies shall follow the process as laid out in policy 3160 (Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers).

The Board may designate these funds for a specific purpose. The Board will expend these funds for such previously designated specific purpose except that they may also be used for other extraordinary or emergency expenditures which may be necessary but not otherwise budgeted.

The account shall be subject to the annual audit as required by State statute. The Board shall review the fund balance on an annual basis.

(cf. 3160 – Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-222 Appropriations and budget
10-248a Unexpended education funds account

Policy adopted: April 4, 2017

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Newtown, Connecticut

Resolution passed by the BOE 3/20/2018

WHEREAS, The Board of Education has included a line item in the budget for Special Education Contingency; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education recognizes that guidelines for the use of such monies should be specified; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education policy for the Non-lapsing Education Fund, P3171.1, addresses the education non-lapsing account without addressing Special Education Contingency; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Special Education Contingency line item be used for unforeseen Special Education expenses that may result from students moving into the district, from court placements, from DCYS, from mediated settlements, and changes to IEP's; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Special Education Contingency line item be used to cover additional costs that are expected to exceed the Special Education budget in total; and be it further;

RESOLVED, That the Special Education Contingency line item be available for expense averages as presented to the BOE; for tuition, transportation, teachers, paraeducators, BT's, BCBA, professional services, specialized services, equipment, supplies and materials, or any other expenses required by a student's IEP; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this line item only be used for Special Education purposes for expenditures so noted above; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education request of the Board of Finance that any balance in the Special Education Contingency line at the end of the fiscal year be deposited in the non-lapsing education fund and be designated for Special Education purposes, and that these monies retain the Special Education designation within the account; and be it further

RESOLVED, That prior to any expenditure from the non-lapsing account, the Board of Education will vote to authorize such spending, and the Board will expend these funds for such previously designated purpose except under extraordinary or emergency circumstances.

SPED Budget History

2/6/2018

ET AND EXPENDITURE HISTORY

2009-10			2010-11			2011-12			2012-13		
APPROVED BUDGET	EXPENDED	DIFFERENCE									
\$3,307,871	\$3,322,318	(\$14,447)	\$3,299,391	\$3,385,044	(\$125,653)	\$3,454,402	\$3,326,615	\$127,787	\$3,406,115	\$3,263,662	\$142,453
\$1,887,767	\$1,736,912	\$150,855	\$1,920,270	\$1,782,812	\$137,458	\$1,878,277	\$2,030,981	(\$152,714)	\$2,190,069	\$2,077,220	\$112,849
\$19,680	\$131,499	(\$111,819)	\$38,000	\$280,325	(\$242,325)	\$104,756	\$254,402	(\$149,646)	\$168,428	\$270,999	(\$102,571)
\$6,100	\$14,619	(\$7,519)	\$6,100	\$7,004	(\$904)	\$6,100	\$8,519	(\$2,419)	\$6,100	\$15,435	(\$9,335)
\$1,500	\$130	\$1,400	\$0	\$553	(\$553)	\$22,304	\$22,387	(\$83)	\$36,244	\$23,493	\$12,751
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,388	\$41,756	(\$31,368)	\$20,360	\$14,088	\$6,312	\$15,360	\$22,298	(\$6,938)
\$750,698	\$869,187	(\$118,489)	\$851,742	\$1,008,678	(\$156,936)	\$958,915	\$1,221,374	(\$262,459)	\$1,225,326	\$1,734,422	(\$509,096)
\$3,429	\$8,995	(\$5,566)	\$7,900	\$8,854	(\$1,554)	\$7,500	\$9,463	(\$2,163)	\$7,900	\$7,904	(\$404)
\$61,492	\$58,487	\$2,505	\$68,345	\$60,662	\$7,583	\$62,268	\$82,460	(\$20,192)	\$62,268	\$60,384	(\$7,126)
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$31,326	\$31,572	(\$24)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
\$8,100	\$6,184	\$1,816	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$9,200	\$7,186	\$1,414	\$4,600	\$4,821	(\$221)
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,590	(\$590)
\$6,046,637	\$6,147,751	(\$101,314)	\$6,195,362	\$6,607,060	(\$411,698)	\$6,524,082	\$6,978,225	(\$454,143)	\$7,123,810	\$7,491,238	(\$367,428)

2013-14			2014-15			2015-16			2016-17		
APPROVED BUDGET	EXPENDED	DIFFERENCE	APPROVED BUDGET	EXPENDED	DIFFERENCE	APPROVED BUDGET	EXPENDED	DIFFERENCE	APPROVED BUDGET	EXPENDED	DIFFERENCE
\$3,463,116	\$3,448,513	\$14,603	\$3,417,165	\$3,563,235	(\$146,070)	\$3,655,221	\$3,680,555	(\$25,334)	\$3,903,185	\$3,842,698	\$60,487
\$2,278,109	\$2,352,879	(\$74,570)	\$2,602,342	\$2,615,674	(\$13,332)	\$2,624,504	\$2,625,950	(\$1,446)	\$2,821,343	\$2,865,881	(\$44,538)
\$266,272	\$155,445	\$110,827	\$139,645	\$198,600	(\$58,955)	\$144,602	\$348,245	(\$203,643)	\$164,602	\$138,788	\$25,814
\$8,600	\$10,713	(\$2,113)	\$8,600	\$6,688	\$1,912	\$30,000	\$1,630	\$21,370	\$25,000	\$22,740	\$2,260
\$37,331	\$39,298	(\$1,967)	\$37,331	\$47,035	(\$9,704)	\$37,331	\$31,951	\$3,380	\$37,331	\$27,422	\$9,909
\$12,860	\$19,465	(\$6,605)	\$14,264	\$21,451	(\$7,187)	\$15,860	\$36,847	(\$20,987)	\$25,000	\$15,113	\$9,887
\$1,958,127	\$1,888,945	\$68,182	\$1,988,341	\$2,173,375	(\$185,034)	\$2,265,317	\$3,136,813	(\$871,496)	\$2,990,002	\$2,992,727	(\$2,725)
\$7,500	\$7,081	\$419	\$7,500	\$6,865	\$635	\$7,500	\$4,955	\$2,545	\$1,300	\$7,508	\$792
\$62,268	\$62,507	(\$239)	\$62,268	\$57,128	\$5,140	\$59,268	\$51,872	\$7,396	\$62,138	\$62,533	\$1,605
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
\$9,200	\$0	\$9,200	\$9,200	\$7,626	\$1,574	\$9,200	\$5,252	\$3,948	\$8,200	\$14,469	(\$6,269)
\$1,000	\$1,947	(\$947)	\$1,000	\$1,912	(\$912)	\$1,000	\$1,750	(\$750)	\$1,000	\$1,395	\$395
\$8,104,383	\$7,987,393	\$116,990	\$8,288,656	\$8,699,589	(\$410,933)	\$8,849,803	\$9,948,820	(\$1,099,017)	\$10,050,001	\$9,991,274	\$58,727