

**Frequently Asked Questions
Windsor Board of Education Budget**

1. *How much does the state provide to the Town per pupil for education?*

The Town annually receives an Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant. For 2009-2010 the grant is \$11,547,663 that amounts to approximately \$3072 per student. The ECS monies remain in the Town budget. The Town also receives some funding for transportation. For 2009-2010 the Town is anticipated to receive \$457,886.

2. *There are four elementary schools and Roger Wolcott Early Childhood Center. How can we be sure there is equity in the budgets for each school?*

For each elementary school's site-budget, a formula based upon the number of students is used. For the current 2009-2010 school year specifically \$198 per student is allotted for supplies and equipment. There will be no change in this amount for 2010-2011.

3. *Is the school system required to provide transportation to public AND parochial school children?*

Yes, by law Windsor Public Schools must transport both public and parochial students. In addition to transporting students to Windsor Public schools, we transport students to St. Gabriel and Trinity Christian schools and to Praise, Power and Prayer school.

4. *Are we required to provide kindergarten to children in Windsor who desire it?*

Yes. Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10-15 define the obligation of towns to maintain public schools. "Public school including kindergartens shall be maintained in each town for at least one hundred eighty days of actual school sessions during each year."

5. *What is the difference between "Major Maintenance" and "Capital Improvement?"*

Capital Improvement projects tied to the schools involve new construction, additions, modifications or improvements of a non-recurring nature that will cost at least 1/10 of 1% of the tax levy; or a project that is a repair/maintenance task of significant magnitude, complexity and/or cost to warrant referring the project to the Public Building Commission. Projects not meeting the above criteria but needing to be addressed would be considered under the Major Maintenance Plan. Painting of classrooms, repair and replacement of equipment, e.g., lighting, refinishing gym floors, replacing carpet and/or tile are examples of work that falls under Major Maintenance.

6. *Are both the Capital Improvement and Major Maintenance budget items included in the Board of Education budget?*

No. The Capital Improvement Plan is included in the Town's budget while the Major Maintenance Plan is in the Board of Education budget.

7. *What does the Windsor Public Schools (WPS) pay to monitor that only students who live in Windsor attend the Windsor Public Schools?*

The 2009-2010 budget provides for one full time and one part time Residency Officers dedicated to investigating students who are suspected of not being Windsor residents at a cost of approximately \$72,000.

8. *What percentage of the Board of Education budget is dedicated to special education?*

According to the 2008-2009 Strategic School Profile, 20.3% of the Windsor budget, as compared to the State average of 20.5%, was used for special education and pupil services that support special education (psychologists, social workers, speech clinicians, paraprofessionals, occupational therapists, and tutors).

9. *How does the percent of Windsor students in special education compare with the State average percent of students in special education?*

According to the 2008-2009 Strategic School Profile, Windsor Public Schools special education students comprise 11.1% of the student population compared to the State average of 11.6%.

10. *At what age do children begin to receive special education services?*

The District assumes responsibility for children in need of special education services beginning on their third birthday. In Connecticut, the task of assessing and serving special needs children before the age of three is the responsibility of the Birth to Three System.

11. *Are parents required to pay for the extra costs of educating children with special education?*

No. By law the responsibility for costs of educating special education students, as with all students, rests fully with the school district that has responsibility for their education.

12. *How much funding does the State provide for special education compared to the costs?*

The Special Education Excess Costs that the Town received from the state for 2008-2009 amounted to \$1,496,800 compared to a Special Education/Pupil Services expenditures for the same year of \$13,347,000. The 2009-2010 Special Education Excess Costs the Town will receive from the state is estimated to be \$1,350,000.

13. *There are special education students who attend school out of the district. What is the average cost of an out-of-district tuition?*

The average cost of out-of-district tuition is \$60,000 per student.

14. *How much does the state reimburse the Town for the tuition that is paid out?*

The amount of reimbursement depends upon who places the child.

For a child placed out of district by the Windsor Public Schools, reimbursement is provided for tuition costs that exceed 4.5 times the per pupil costs to educate a student, i.e., for costs above approximately \$60,300.

For a child placed out of district by a State Agency, e.g., Department of Children and Families (DCF), reimbursement is provided for tuition costs that exceed 1 times the per pupil costs to educate a student, i.e., for costs above approximately \$13,400.

Reimbursement is made to the Town, not to the Board of Education

15. *How much does the district pay in out-of-district tuition?*

Over the last five years the average costs have been \$2,805,000.

16. *On average, what are the gate receipts taken in annually from football and basketball?*

Gate receipts for girls and boys varsity sports average \$24,500 a year.

17. *How are the gate receipts used?*

The gate receipts are used to offset a number of costs in the athletic program, e.g., the funds are used to pay for game officials, timers, ticket takers, security personnel, trainers and equipment reconditioning.

18. *How many WPS students participate in magnet schools?*

For the 2009-2010 school year, 399 students are enrolled in 23 magnet schools. (See the chart that follows this document for the breakout.)

19. *For how many of these students do we pay tuition and at what cost?*

For 2009-2010 we will pay tuition for 223 students at a cost of \$ 689,678.

20. *Why do we pay tuition for only some students to attend magnet schools?*

The issue of tuition payment for students attending magnet schools has become more complex over the past several years.

Currently, Windsor pays for tuition for all of its students attending magnet schools operated by the Capital Region Education Council (CREC). We have always paid tuition to those schools with whom we have partnered over the years, that is, Hartford Montessori, Greater Hartford Academy for the Performing Arts, Greater Hartford Academy for the Arts and Science, and the Metropolitan Learning Center. Over the past three years, due to changes in the legislation, we have had to pay tuition for students admitted to Great Path Academy Magnet School and the University of Hartford Magnet School. Even though we are not partnered with them, under the parent choice legislation we are obligated to pay tuition for any Windsor students who attend these schools. For 2009-2010, we are also being charged for students at Two Rivers and the Public Safety Academy. In addition, although we had voiced our opposition to participating in the newly established full-time Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science, 2 students were admitted to the full-day program. We had always participated only in the half day program, which costs less. In the current school year we have 227 students attending CREC magnet schools for which we must pay tuition.

In addition to paying tuition for Windsor students attending CREC-run magnet schools, for the first time we had 2 students accepted at the CT International Baccalaureate Academy in East Hartford, for which we must pay tuition.

Of great concern this year was the Hartford Public Schools' assertion that it had the right to charge magnet school tuition for Hartford-operated magnet schools, called "Host" schools. Hartford wanted to collect tuition on every one of its suburban students beginning in 2009-2010. The costs would have been prohibitive for Windsor. Payment of tuition for suburban students attending Hartford Host Magnet Schools was averted through action by the CT State Legislature. However, the tuition issue remains unresolved and towns will surely face the issue again in the near future. There are currently 163 Windsor students attending Hartford Host magnet schools.

We are closely monitoring the magnet school tuition issue and scrutinize every tuition bill and student acceptance to these magnet school programs.

21. *How is a student selected to attend a magnet school?*

For the 2009-2010 school year, a central lottery for both the CREC and Hartford Host magnet schools was conducted through the state's RESCO office located in Hartford. Unfortunately, an agreement put forth by the Commissioner of Education Mark McQuillan two years ago that relieved the burden of suburban towns that already participated in magnet schools at 5% or more of their student population, the case in Windsor, was not applied to

this year's lottery. The agreement stated, "Districts participating at 5% or above should be recruited by magnet school operators only as a final effort to address unused student capacity." This year's lottery did not honor the "5% rule," and students were granted placement at their first choice school, regardless of whether they were coming from districts that already enrolled 5% or more students in magnet schools. As a result Windsor had students admitted to the Public Safety Academy, Two Rivers, and the full-time program at the Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science, for whom we must pay tuition. Students attending the Greater Hartford Academy for the Performing Arts continue to be chosen by audition.

22. *If a special education student attends a magnet school, who is responsible for the costs of the special education services: the magnet school or WPS?*

Windsor Public Schools are responsible for the special education and related services costs for any Windsor student who attends a Magnet School. Windsor is responsible for the Planning and Placement Team process which determines the special education and related services need for each child. For the 2008-2009 school year, the special education and related services costs for students educated in magnet schools were \$85,277.

23. *Is the Board of Education responsible for transporting students to Magnet Schools?*

Most students attending magnet schools are bussed by Hartford or the Capital Region Education Council (CREC). The Windsor Public Schools transport 23 students to three schools: Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science, Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts and Glastonbury High School Vocational/Agriscience program. In some isolated cases we sometimes transport individual students based upon a special education Individual Education Plan (IEPP or a 504 plan.

24. *Is the Board of Education required to provide an education for students expelled from school?*

By law the Board of Education must provide an alternative education, e.g., at least two hours of tutoring per day, for students through the age of 18 who are expelled. The Board of Education is not required to provide an alternative education program for an expelled student between the ages of 16-18 when the expellable action involved any of the following: possession of a deadly weapon on school property or at a school sponsored activity, the use of a deadly weapon in the commission of a crime off school property, the sale or distribution of drugs on school property or at a school sponsored event, or the sale or distribution of drugs off school property. The school district is also not obligated to provide an alternative education to students ages 16-18 who have been expelled previously, or to students over the age of 18. The Board of Education can choose, however, to provide an alternative educational opportunity. If the student being expelled is a special education student, the district is required to offer an alternative education program, which is determined by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT).

25. *Is the student breakfast/lunch program included in the Board of Education budget?*

No. The Windsor Food Service program is self-sufficient; no Board of Education monies are used to support the program.

26. *Where do the Windsor Public School teacher salaries fall compared to the 31 greater Hartford communities?*

At the entry level of the Master's Salary Schedule, Windsor teacher salaries rank 20th of the 31 greater Hartford communities.

27. *Does the Board pay social security for certified staff?*

No. Certified staff do not pay into the Social Security System, rather they pay into the Connecticut Teacher Retirement System. The Board of Education makes no social security payments on behalf of certified staff.

28. *Does the Board pay any part of teacher retirement?*

No. Teachers pay into the Connecticut Teacher Retirement. The Board of Education pays no part of a teacher's retirement.

29. *Does the Board pay health benefits for retired teachers?*

No. The Board does not pay any health benefits for retired teachers.

30. *If the Board of Education has money left over in its budget at the end of the fiscal year, can the funds be carried over to the next school year?*

No. By law, the Board of Education must return unspent funds to the town.

31. *What is the average amount of dollars returned to the Town by the Board of Education over the last seven years?*

Over the last seven years approximately \$1,342,000 was returned to the town, an average of \$192,700 each year.

32. *Is the Windsor Adult and Continuing Education program a part of the Board of Education budget or the Town's budget?*

The Adult and Continuing Education Program is part of the Board of Education budget.

33. *Is any part of the Adult Education program mandated by law?*

Yes. Required programs include instruction in Americanization and United States citizenship, English for adults with limited English proficiency, Adult Basic Education, and GED (General Education Diploma) preparation classes. School districts may not charge tuition for these programs.

34. *Is there an annual audit of the school system's financial activity?*

Yes. The audit firm of McGladrey & Pullen is hired by the Town to audit both the Town and School System. The audit includes the general fund, grant funds, food service and student activity funds.