

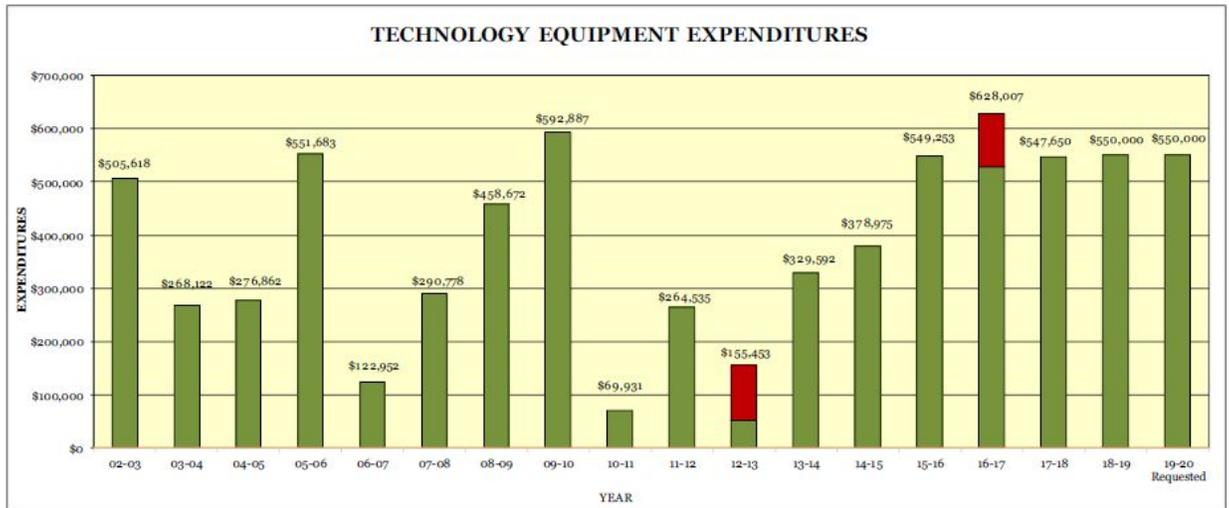
**BOE Answers to LC Questions**  
**3/27/2019**

1. Unfunded mandates are referenced as a strong contributor to an increasing school budget at a time while the student population is decreasing. Thinking about '19-'20 and the past few years, what are 5-8 recent mandates (or more), and what costs/budget impacts would you associate with each?

Most of the mandates developed by the State of Connecticut are not funded, and districts have assumed the costs over the years. In some cases, it is difficult to quantify (such as Teacher Evaluation), since the intensive labor needed to implement has caused administrators to put less time or effort in other important tasks (such as critical oversight of instructional changes, technology development, or data analysis).

Some of the most onerous mandates in the last 5-10 years have included the following:

1. Common Core Curriculum (Adopted in 2010 with a rollout over many years) Required professional development, new resources (textbooks), curriculum development. The estimate is \$200K per year since 2014 (as seen in the Curriculum budget).
2. SBAC computerized testing (Adopted 2011, piloted in 2014, fully implemented in 2015) Required technology upgrades. While difficult to estimate exactly how much this cost, the technology equipment budget increased from approximately \$350K/yr (2002-2010) to a level spending of \$550K/yr. The additional equipment in district means additional maintenance, licensing agreements and ongoing replacement costs.



3. Teacher evaluation system (Approved in 2012, piloted 2013, fully implemented in 2014) With approximately 450 certified staff in district when the evaluation system started,

this mandate required 1000s of additional administrator and teacher hours per year to conduct goal setting meetings, observations, mid-year conferences, and final evaluation meetings and reports. While no additional staff were hired specifically to address this, this mandate significantly changed how administrators were spending their time. The focus took time from teaching and learning, curriculum and instructional oversight, and data analysis and school improvement. Refresher training costs \$3,200 for administrators.

4. NGSS curriculum (Adopted in 2015, PD through 2017, fully implemented in 2018) Required curriculum purchase, professional development and new resources.
5. Student data privacy (2015) Required administrator time in obtaining signed agreements and requires continued management of the agreements. This legislation has been revised every year since 2015 due to the unanticipated complexities of the law. It has required hundreds of hours in our district each year to 1) understand how to implement the legislation, 2) write and adopt policy addressing the legislation, 3) contact and negotiate a signed agreement with each vendor, 4) manage the paperwork to ensure that the hundreds of agreements with vendors remain current. (This has taken a great deal of time/hours from the Tech Director's current role).
6. Graduation requirements (Begins with 2019 freshman class) Requires all students to graduate with no less than 25 credits, including a senior capstone project. Currently, students need 23 credits. While the minimum number of credits has increased, the actual course requirements have changed (additional health, World Language mandate, STEM, Capstone project/senior experience).
7. Restraint and seclusion. Initially required all staff to be trained annually. The legislation has been modified to allow less frequent training and more specific staff. While this is something that is incorporated into professional development, the state currently has a working group evaluating the mandates on professional development. In practice, most districts are unable to address all of the professional development that is required. In order to add more professional development, districts must somehow find time for it within the existing contracts.
8. Safe School Climate. Legislation addresses the formation of Safe School Climate Committees, SRBI process, anti-bullying protocols and policies, and social/emotional practices across K-12.

**Examples of Current Mandate Requirements and Funding for 2019-20 in the Curriculum Budget (does not include currently proposed legislation):**

Curriculum and Instruction - p. 176 NGSS, Literacy and Common Core, TEAM mentorship, Alpine/SRBI (academic and social/emotional), NWEA training, curriculum development/units of study revised to align with State standards/NGSS \$209,494

NWEA - p. 176 interim assessments to support Common Core standards and Smarter Balanced testing (3x per year in math and language arts - elementary, middle, and high) \$33,565  
Panorama - p. 176 Safe School Climate (district-wide survey re: SEL) \$13,250  
NGSS - p. 177 \$2,625, On-site Coaching \$3,000  
NGSS - p. 177 CT Science Center Teacher Training \$13,425  
Teacher Evaluation Training/Refresher - p. 177 \$3,200 (many hours taken from principals/directors and other administrators to execute)  
Literacy and Common Core Standards (Workshop Model) \$10,000  
Science Resource NGSS - p. 178 (example) Mystery Science - \$4,995  
STEM (graduation requirement and NGSS) - p. 178 new programming in biomedical (MS still under grant) \$39,922  
Safe School Climate/SRBI - Alpine Technology p. 181 \$31,266  
Rosetta Stone/Language Lab p. 182/Language Lab updates \$11,972 (graduation requirements for 1 credit language).

2. Thinking about recent trends in testing scores in the elementary grades, can you identify what needs to be done to address this? And specifically, what items and cost in the proposed BOE budget will help drive improvement?

We need greater direction and oversight, which would include vertical and horizontal articulation of instructional strategies, common assessments, and academic interventions.

We are working currently on a more consistent focus on conceptual frameworks, interim assessments, and revision of curriculum. However, the most important aspect of this is support for principals and staff at the classroom level, including vertical articulation of common and evidence-based practices that will help to ensure students are experiencing rigorous instruction and are being provided consistent supports (SRBI) if they are struggling academically.

This includes...

- Teachers to work with students who have identified and specific language needs (Wilson, Orton) and deliberate and ongoing services
- Additional professional development for teachers in building and implementing common assessments (SBAC)
- Training in language supports (Wilson, Orton), which is linked to SPED action steps in the self-study
- Data analysis of student performance and improvement plans at the district and building level

- Director of Teaching and Learning to provide greater oversight and ensure a vision of consistency, coherency, and accountability.

3. Discuss the history of the need for the new position, Director of Teaching/Learning. Is this a relatively new need, why? How are the job functions of this new position being addressed today? Why does it require a new position?

Does it make more sense to first have an Assistant Superintendent in place before filling this position? Why?

**Part of this question was answered in a previous question.**

This position had been requested in the past and is not a new need. As instructional changes were warranted given the implementation of Common Core, Next Generation Science (inquiry-based and cross-cutting concepts), graduation requirements, as well as the standardized assessments related to these new standards (e.g., Smarter Balanced,, NGSS, new SAT), additional time, effort, and funding was necessary. This includes ongoing and extensive training for staff, revision to curriculum and instructional practices, as well as the need for consulting work (concept-based curriculum, NGSS) and new programming (STEM, capstone).

The need is not new, but we have tried to parcel out some of this work only recently. We have started later than many districts in acclimating to new standards, practices, and assessments. Unfortunately, this has resulted in inconsistencies and lack of thoughtful direction and oversight. We currently have (4) .1 FTE K-8 coordinators (math, science, social studies and language arts) to offer some level of instructional oversight and support to the Assistant Superintendent at a total cost of \$38,752. These coordinators were teacher-leaders with no decrease in teaching and no ability for supervision. These coordinators are included in our reductions in the 2019-20 budget to offset the cost for a full time Director of Teaching and Learning.

Social and Emotional learning is also a huge focus in our district. *The most recent incidents have provided clear evidence that we are still struggling as a community.* The needs are great and we must be able to provide the supports for our students, staff, and families moving forward. Part of the work of the newly hired Director of Teaching and Learning will include oversight of our DSSCC (District Safe School Climate Committee), which not only embraces the CASEL model of social emotional learning, but will be working to implement consistent SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Strategies) practices to support students who are identified with academic and emotional issues. This needs to include Tier 1, 2, and 3 levels of support and progress

monitoring, which outlines the type and frequency of supports, as well as the assessments to ensure supports are helping our students.

The Assistant Superintendent search begins in early April and this candidate will be in place before July 1. The Director of Teaching and Learning search will begin following the hire of the Ass't Superintendent and the candidate will not begin until September 1. The Assistant Superintendent will not only be a part of that search but will work both as collaborator and supervisor, ensuring the goals of the district related to a vision of teaching and learning are met.

4. What kind of person would do this job, does this position exist in other districts currently? Seems like a specific skill set that would require a lengthy search, what would be the process?

Through the lens of an educator, these positions are not uncommon, nor are they difficult to fill. Educators who have a strong grasp of the elements of instruction and “best” practices, along with a deep understanding of assessment and data-driven decision making, would be a natural fit for this type of position. Some candidates may already be in similar positions and have a strong grasp of instruction, instructional supports, data analysis, and system-wide improvement planning.

**Attachment A** shows the number of districts in our DRG where a Director of Teaching and Learning is already in place. In one example, we have groups of administrators visiting literacy instruction (Reader's/Writer's Workshop Model) in Monroe. The Director there has direct oversight and provides ongoing support and guidance to administrators, teacher leaders, and literacy support specialists to ensure consistency and accountability. They have had much greater success on high stakes testing, but more importantly on the constancy of purpose and vision around teaching and learning throughout the school community, consistency of instructional delivery, integrity of their data analysis teams and school improvement planning aligned with student performance.

5. Please review captured savings in commodities contracts that can be reflected in new BOE budget reductions -- i.e., diesel, propane, oil, electricity, solar (itemize each).

Since the Board's budget was approved Oil and Diesel bid prices were received for next year. Diesel was budgeted at \$2.25 per gallon and it came in at \$2.17 per gallon. This translates into a \$192.00 savings as we only plan on using 2,400 gallons. All our school buses will be powered by propane. The oil bid price was \$2.19 versus a budget at \$2.25 resulting in a \$2,160 potential budget reduction. Again our oil quantities have been significantly reduced due to our continued conversion to natural gas for heating purposes. Propane has not been bid as of this

date. The current price is \$1.29 per gallon and the budget is at \$1.39. For electricity we are locked in with Eversource for transmission and pay the rates approved by the PUC. For generation we have a negotiated rate for next year of \$.08280 while the rate we just came off of was \$.07980

or a \$.0030 increase which was very favorable during this increasing energy market.

The Reed solar rate for next year is \$.02 less than the generation rate, and based on estimated solar capture for next year amounts to \$13,094. The Middle school solar rate is \$.0094 less and amounts to \$1,592 of cost avoidance. All of these amounts with the exception of the oil and diesel, are included in the BOE budget for next year. We do not know what the terms of the Sandy Hook installation are at this time.

6. Increase of \$133,447 in Building/Site Maintenance.

\$2,747 in maintenance salaries due to two additional work days in the calendar for 2019-20.

Their contract for next year is yet to be negotiated, (so no wage increase is included in this line item). \$4,800 Additional, 0.82% increase in Contracted Building Services for refinishing the gym floors. All the other services detailed on page 203 are at the same budget as the current year. \$70,900 increase in Building and Site Maintenance projects, discussed below. And \$55,000 for a replacement maintenance vehicle (Two were scheduled for this year one was already cut.)

Some non-safety-related project deferment can reduce by \$188,000. Can these be prioritized to capture \$150,000 in reductions/deferment?

#### **Middle Gate HVAC in Gym: \$45,000**

Continuation of the ductless split program that was started recently, the MG cafeteria was done this past summer, HAW and MS will have units installed this April break and the MG Gym is scheduled for this summer. This year we had to have three early release days because of heat 8/29, 9/4 and 9/6. The instructional program is impacted by our changing weather and we need to provide a suitable environment in order to provide effective instruction. This is a priority of the BOE.

#### **Head O'Meadow sink/floor tile replacement: \$15,000**

These sinks and cabinets are original to the building, many are inoperable, leaking and should have been replaced a while ago. Water tests from a legacy faucet has come up with a bad result. The faucets are made with lead and brass fixtures and are not used for drinking, The multiple sinks per classroom will be replaced and consolidated to one per classroom. The cabinets below are delaminating with broken hinges and don't close properly. This is a priority that the finance sub committee of the board authorized a start of this program with funds from this year to be continued with this requested total.

**Reed carpet/flooring replacement program: \$20,000**

Replacement of the lower hallway carpeting has been done over the Christmas and February school breaks this year. This area is where the two lower hallways come together in front of the elevator below the library. This will finish the main hallways downstairs. The carpet has been fraying, bubbling and presenting a trip hazard. The upstairs will need to be done and all classrooms as well. This carpet replacement program will continue for several years thereafter. All the carpeting is all original and needs to stay on a replacement schedule.

Reed shade replacement in library: \$12,000. Currently inoperable and necessary for daily programs where darkening is required. The motor system has failed and a complete new system needs to be installed.

**Middle School acoustical ceiling tile/lighting in LMC & D14: \$31,000 (\$26,000 / \$9,000)**

The ceiling is covered in a sprayed on cellulose product that is old, yellow and dingey. There is new carpet and paint in the media center and it needs to have this final touch to be a more inviting place for our children to be. The other area used to be the Back Door Cafe where the ceiling was impacted by the cooking, grease, steam and smoke that occurred over the time it had that use. It also is dingy in appearance.

**High School repaint lockers \$15,000**

Annually the worst bank of lockers are painted during the summer. This has been and will continue to be an ongoing maintenance project. Kids respect property better when they know it is maintained well. Remember “the sign of a civilized society is how well it is maintained”.

**Sidewalk replacement to field \$25,000**

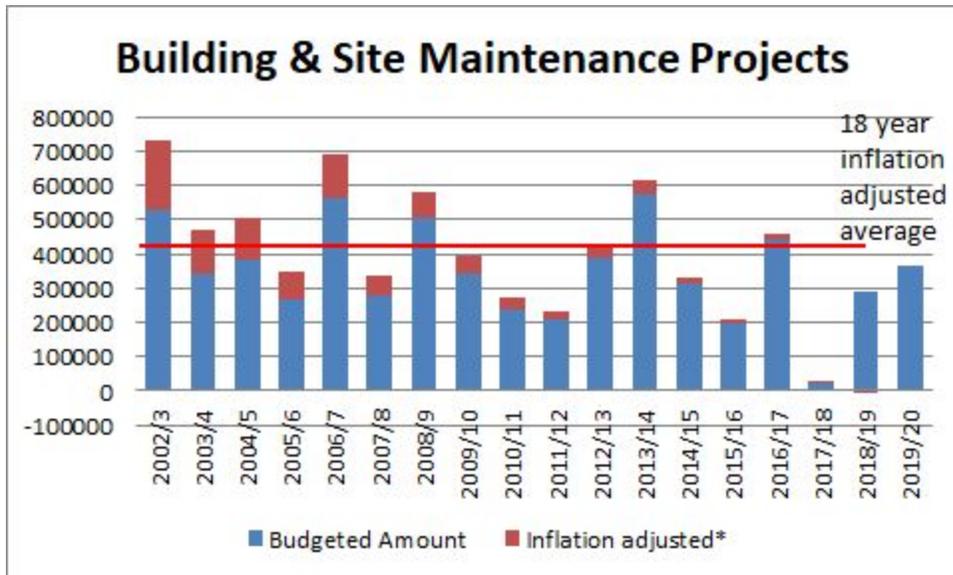
This sidewalk is part concrete and part asphalt. It is lifting in areas and presents a tripping hazard. It is heavily used and can constitute a safety hazard.

**Warehouse loading area repaving \$25,000**

This project will require a demolition of what is present, install proper drainage, and new stairs and dock. Currently the water has broken the asphalt which presents a safety hazard and continuing deterioration.

For context, the Board of Education is sensitive to the fact that large fluctuations in a budget are undesirable. Thus, the Board priority over the past couple of years has been to maintain level funding for building maintenance projects. The 2019-20 budget includes \$363,700

representing a 24.2% increase from 2018-19 and a 14.2% decrease from the 18 year inflation-adjusted average.



7. List of newest state mandates and aprox. Cost associated per mandate

**This question has come up several times and is answered elsewhere. See previous response.**

8. Pg.49 & 61, 102 student travel and staff mileage up almost double-why?

Page 49 is the summary of all the elementary schools and includes the page 61 totals for workshops and district professional travel. Elementary principals and staff conferences for professional development are paid here. SHS has increased \$1,400, \$500 for staff PD and \$900 for administrative PD. MG has increased \$1,008, \$800 for a new 4th grade field trip with the balance for RIS orientation and chorus rehearsals. The other two elementary schools show no increase.

9. Pg.191 office supplies?

Details are included on the page noted.

10. Pg. 49 printing service up almost 50% from 2016/17. Purchase agent said he saved almost 30%.

Page 49 is the summary of required printing for all the elementary schools, a \$270 increase from the current year. This entire increase is for Hawley school to stock up on cumulative

student folders. They plan on buying a lot of 500 which is cheaper (per unit) than smaller lot sizes and will last for 3 to 5 years. If they buy less they cost more, so they will stock up, as their prior inventory will be depleted soon. (Comparing to 2016-17 expended (3 years ago) is a 62% (not almost 50%) increase.)

11. Pg 189 & 193-Cabe membership \$20,726, why does it cost another \$4,500, for policy assistance?

The policy assistance request (page 189) is for professional services in the Superintendent's office. This may involve a detailed review of existing, proposed and or conflicting issues for which additional guidance may be required. For example, CAFE provides sample school board policies and regulations, telephone consultation on policy issues, sample school board policies and regulations whenever needed. This policy assistance is available as a fee-for-service and is discounted for member districts.

Fee-for-service is separate from the CAFE membership fee which includes tailored workshops on issues (FOIA, roles and responsibilities, board self-evaluation and goal-setting), access to updates and CAFE publications (*Advocacy Highlights*, *Policy Highlights*, and the *CAFE Journal*), participation in the CAFE Leadership Institute and board member development, legislative advocacy, and Legislative breakfasts.

12. \$8500 paint bleacher? Why did you discontinue community service hours from H.S. kids working with custodians?

For the past 11-12 years the stadium bleachers have been professionally cleaned, scraped, concrete patched and properly maintained. Prior to this they were done in a sloppy manner, painted over gum, butts, without cleaning or concrete repair. If we have an important community gathering area it should reflect community values and not community service hours which do not have the same commitment to attention to detail.

13. Pg 205 cooling station- why was this not included with the other schools cooling station bonding?

They were not included in bonding. Small projects like this are not eligible or recommended for such financing. Bonding is used for projects that are included on the BOE's 5-year CIP that individually exceeds \$292,803 in estimated cost.

Two other cooling projects will be done this April with BOF approval from the non-lapsing account and when completed will provide at least one cooling station at each school. Additional air conditioning projects will be incorporated into future budgets and CIP plans as appropriate.

14. Pg 188-equipment item 734- up 3578.36%

This increase is exclusively due to the security surveillance system upgrade (page 194). The comparison of a \$40,462 budget request to a previous budget amount of only \$1,100 will invariably produce a large percentage increase, as so noted. However, our cameras are old and technology has improved markedly and the district needs to stay on top of this going forward. For the past several years no funds have really been invested in security equipment other than for radios.

15. Knowing that you are looking into online virtual classes for some students, why are you not using virtual classes for teacher conferences and collaboration instead of travel?

Just as technology is a resource (not a substitute) in the classroom, the district can use it as a resource for staff conferencing and collaboration. In fact, we have used webinars for many trainings and workshops, including training on the new e-finance at Central Office. However, in many cases, on line options are simply not available, such as training in concept-based curriculum, responsive classroom, NGSS, and Reader's/Writer's Workshop. National conferences are also unique and collaborative networking opportunities for teachers and principals, as well as educational experts in their field that share new trends in education.

16. Pg 209 - what employees take vehicles home?

Five maintenance mechanics and the Facilities Director take district provided vehicles home. They are on 24 hour call with their required tools and equipment stored in the vehicle. The director, two electricians, a plumber, a carpenter and a HVAC Technician.