



Rocky Hill Public Schools

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES, 761 OLD MAIN ST., P.O. BOX 627

ROCKY HILL, CONNECTICUT 06067-0627 • (860) 258-7701

March 25, 2026

Mr. Ray Carpentino, Town Manager
761 Old Main Street
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Dear Mr. Carpentino:

Pursuant to Section 803 of the Town Charter, I am submitting the Board of Education's adopted budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026–27. This budget is designed to maintain the essential programs currently offered by the school district while carefully reviewing all expenditures, addressing identified needs, and implementing cost-saving measures wherever possible.

The Board's adopted budget of \$60,475,193 for FY 2026–27 reflects an 8.98% increase over the FY 2025–26 budget. This increase is driven primarily by rising costs in salaries, benefits, transportation, and tuition.

The certified salary line reflects the teachers' negotiated general wage increase of 3.00% and a step increase of 1.01%, along with a net increase of 6.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, including the restoration of two positions eliminated during the prior year's budget process. The budget includes several staffing adjustments to support district needs, including full-time positions for an Elementary Teacher, Director of Personnel and Performance Management, Secondary Special Education Supervisor, World Language Teacher, Middle School Guidance Counselor, Social Worker, Kindergarten Paraeducator, and Hall Monitor. Part-time additions include a Band Teacher (.2 FTE) and a Math Interventionist (.2 FTE), as well as four stipends to support student activities.

The elimination of a full-time administrative position, the removal of a building substitute at the high school, and a reduction in Physical Therapist services from 1.0 FTE to 0.8 FTE partially offset the staff increases noted earlier. Non-certified salary lines reflect negotiated wage increases for custodians, secretaries, paraprofessionals, and nurses, as well as adjustments for non-bargaining, non-certified staff.

Group health insurance (Line 210) reflects a projected 14.0% rate increase. Transportation (Lines 510, 511, 515, and 516) is based on the lowest responsible bid received through the district's recent Request for Proposals (RFP), resulting in a 14.5% increase. Additional transportation cost drivers include changes in special education transportation needs, in-town magnet school requirements, and varying schedules among out-of-district placements.

The tuition line (561) reflects costs associated with out-of-district placements for students requiring specialized services, as well as tuition obligations for resident students attending magnet schools.

As in most school districts, special education remains one of the most variable and difficult-to-predict components of the budget. Federal and state mandates require districts to provide specialized services to eligible students, often at high cost. Legislative changes have extended eligibility for services through the end of the school year in which a student turns 22.

Enrollment variability continues to present fiscal uncertainty. When a student with specialized needs establishes residency in Rocky Hill—particularly if already placed in an out-of-district program—the district assumes immediate financial responsibility. Although partial reimbursement is available through the state's Excess Cost grant, eligibility is triggered only once expenditures exceed 4.5 times the district's per-pupil expenditure, or approximately \$93,000 per student.

Additionally, when the State of Connecticut, through the Department of Children and Families (DCF), places a Rocky Hill student in an out-of-district program, the district is responsible for the first \$20,653 before qualifying for reimbursement.

Even after eligibility thresholds are met, the state does not fully fund reimbursement. For FY 2026–27, the administration anticipates a reimbursement rate of approximately 70%, leaving the remaining costs to be absorbed by local taxpayers. This results in an estimated \$663,561 in unfunded expenses included in the proposed budget.

In summary, the projected special education cost drivers include:

- Unfunded Excess Costs: \$663,561 (70% reimbursement vs. full funding)
- Required local contribution toward the \$92,937 threshold for seventeen students: \$1,579,929
- Costs for students not reaching the reimbursement threshold: \$534,405
- **Total Projected Impact: \$2,777,895**

The budget document is organized in a manner consistent with prior years to promote clarity and accessibility. It reflects a comprehensive and detailed analysis of all expenditures, including many accounts that remain level-funded or reflect reductions compared to the current fiscal year.

The document is divided into the following sections:

1. **Global** – Summary of object line items with accompanying graphics.
2. **Educational Data** – Overview of 2025 academic performance, including District Performance Index, Smarter Balanced, NGSS, and SAT results, with comparisons to District Reference Group D. Rocky Hill ranked at or near the top when compared to other districts assigned to our District Reference Group (group D) for mathematics,

literacy, and science. These results demonstrate Rocky Hill's excellent academic standing and commitment to preparing students for college and career success.

3. **Enrollment Data** – An overview of student enrollment (including enrollment projections for future years) and the anticipated impact on the school district.
4. **Comparative Data** – A comparison, on a town-by-town basis, of per-pupil expenditures and the Adjusted-Equalized-Net-Grand-List-Per-Capita (a measure of each town's relative wealth) is presented.
5. **Object Budget** – Detailed expenditures by object code.
6. **Program Budget** – Detailed expenditures by program code.
7. **Grants** – An outline of anticipated federal and state grants that impact the Board's budget.
8. **Staffing** – A summary of district-wide staffing and personnel.
9. **Technology** – Proposed FY 2026–27 expenditures and five-year outlook.
10. **Special Education** – Summary of projected costs and key variables. As noted earlier, special education constitutes one of the more mutable components of the Board's budget due to the many federal and state mandates and the indeterminate nature of student enrollment. The administration cannot predict when identified students may move into town with the concomitant financial obligations resulting from their specialized programming needs.
11. **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)** – Overview of long-term capital needs, including roof replacement at West Hill School, continued mechanical system work at Stevens School, and ongoing modernization of technology education classrooms and the library/media center at Griswold Middle School.
12. **Transportation and Magnet Schools** – Transportation contract details and magnet school enrollment and tuition costs.
13. **Facilities** – Detailed facilities budget.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Scott Nozik and I look forward to reviewing the Board of Education's FY 2026–27 budget with you and the members of the Town Council; moreover, we are prepared to provide additional information as requested.

Respectfully,



Mark F. Zito, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

CC: Jessica Loffredo, Chairperson, Rocky Hill Board of Education
Board of Education Members
Scott J. Nozik, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations