

Frequently Asked Questions About the Guilford Public Schools 2010-2011 Education Budget

How will the district's priorities of outstanding classroom instruction and a commitment to professional development be impacted by this budget?

The commitment to outstanding instruction and rigorous learning remains strong. The recommendations made in this budget were difficult and will require sacrificing supplies, furniture, some of the technology slated for lease this coming year and some site improvement work. Most unfortunately, the budget also includes some reductions in staff.

But, expert classroom instruction and professional development for our teachers will not suffer. The district's commitment to a collaborative environment through Professional Learning Communities and the implementation of the Principles of Learning will provide continuous opportunities for our staff to learn from each other and improve instruction for all of our students.

What are Instructional Coaches?

Instructional coaches are a new initiative proposed by Superintendent Tom Forcella to take the district's vision of outstanding instruction to a new level. Four highly trained teaching professionals will be hired to work in each of our four elementary schools. They will provide professional training and feedback to our K-4 teachers with a focus on literacy.

By embedding daily professional development in our schools, our students should reach new heights in learning. This increased focus on literacy in the early years will provide a strong foundation for our students to build on as they progress through school.

Where will the resources come from to pay the Instructional Coaches?

Money will be reallocated from Administrators' salaries to pay for the coaches. One Special Education Coordinator position is being eliminated and another's salary will be funded during the 2010-2011 school year through federal grants.

Does the Education Budget include any funding for new school facilities including site studies, architectural designs, or construction fees?

No. The Education Budget is an operating budget and does not include funding for new facilities.

The Capital category in the budget includes equipment, technology, and site improvement – paving, duct cleaning, carpet and tile replacement, etc.

How will the reduction in staff of \$686,000 impact class sizes?

During the past five years, the Board of Education and the GPS Administration have made it a priority to reduce and subsequently maintain smaller class sizes, particularly at the elementary level.

Enrollments in the district are decreasing slightly. In addition, the majority of the certified positions eliminated are not classroom teachers. The district should maintain the smaller class sizes.

What is the Excess Cost Grant and how does it impact the budget?

The Special Education Excess Cost Grant reimburses school districts for the reasonable costs of special education for a student who lives in the district and whose required program exceeds 4.5 times the district's average per pupil expenditure.

The State of Connecticut has stated that the reimbursement rate for the excess cost of special education in Guilford will be reduced in the 2010-2011 school year from 100% to 70%. This reduction will result in an estimated loss in revenue of \$333,374.

Which categories has the administration been able to reduce?

Staff: The district's administration proposes \$686,000 in staff reductions following a thorough review of all programs and departments.

- 2 Maintenance/Custodial Staff
- 7 Para Educators
- 6.1 Certified Staff
- 1 Administrator
- 1 Secretary
- Technology support - 2 positions reduced from full year to school year

Supplies: Building level administrators reduced individual operating budgets between 27 and 40%.

Which categories in the budget are responsible for the biggest increases and why?

Salaries: 3.05%

Salaries comprise 61.9% of the total education budget. The increase of 3.05% is due primarily to negotiated contractual increases. Prior to staff reductions, salaries increased 5%.

Employee Benefits: 3.3%

Medical costs are increasing. The district's contribution to the employee pension plan has increased. And, unemployment compensation has been projected to increase 6.28% from \$20,000 to \$118,000 due to staff reductions.

Tuition: 15.3%

The increase reflects the number and needs of current out-placed students. It has been adjusted for anticipated graduations and additions. The increase also reflects the anticipated reduction in funds from the Excess Cost Grant.

Transportation: 7.95%

The increase results from contracted prices for transportation services for both Regular and Special Education and the anticipated reduction in funds from the Excess Cost Grant.

How does Guilford's education budget compare with area towns and towns in our District Reference Group (B)?

The 2010-2011 Budget: \$50,021,963

The 2009-2010 Budget: \$48,660,772

Proposed Increase: 2.8%

Proposed Board of Education budget increases in other CT towns:

Madison (DRG B): 3.49%, Branford: 3.42%, Old Saybrook: 4.8%,

Cheshire (DRG B): 2.17%, Glastonbury (DRG B): 2.92%,

The proposed 2010-2011 Guilford Public Schools Education Budget is available at www.guilford.k12.ct.us/board_of_education_information/budget_information