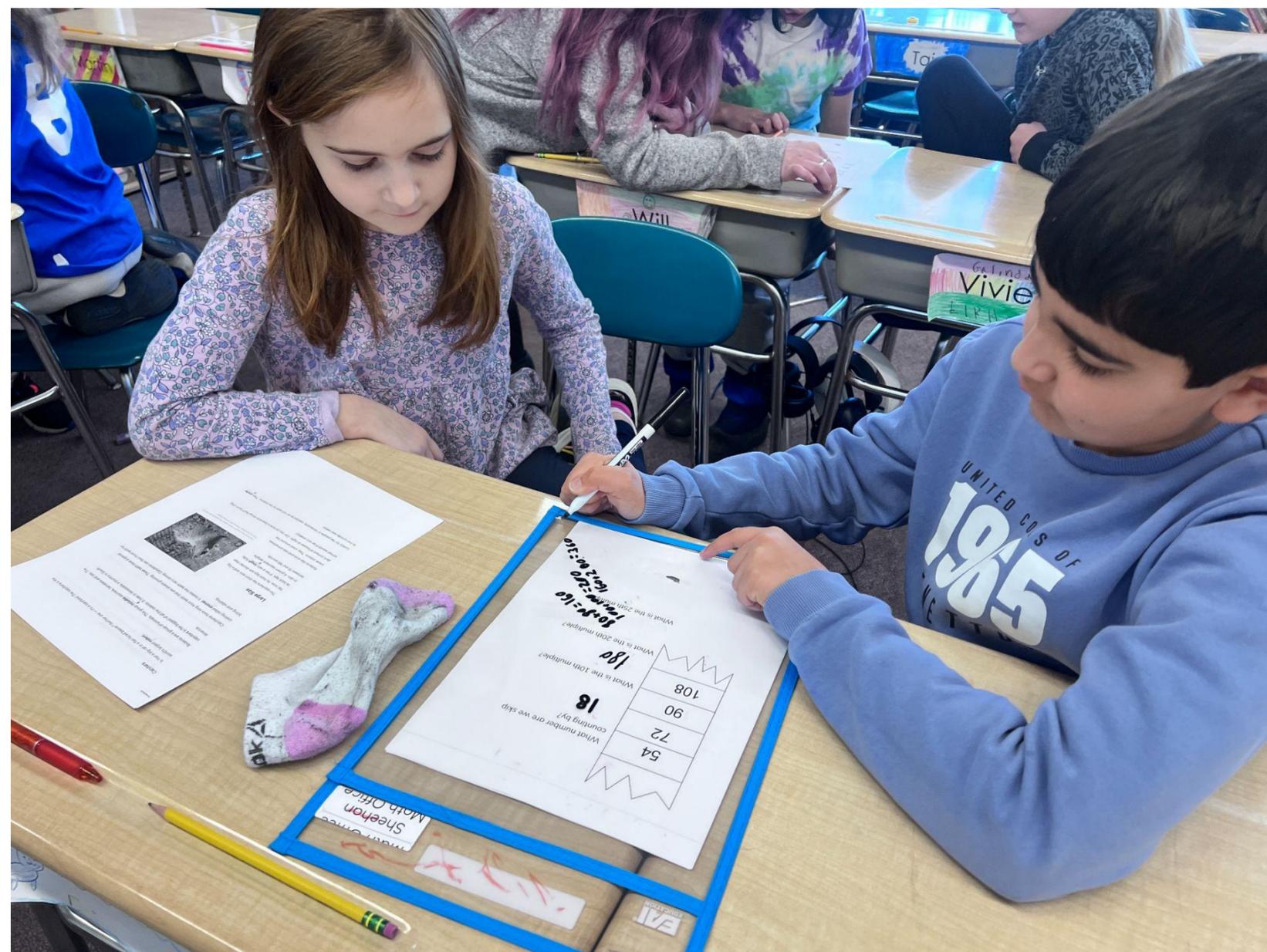




# **Superintendent's Report**

**January 21, 2026**

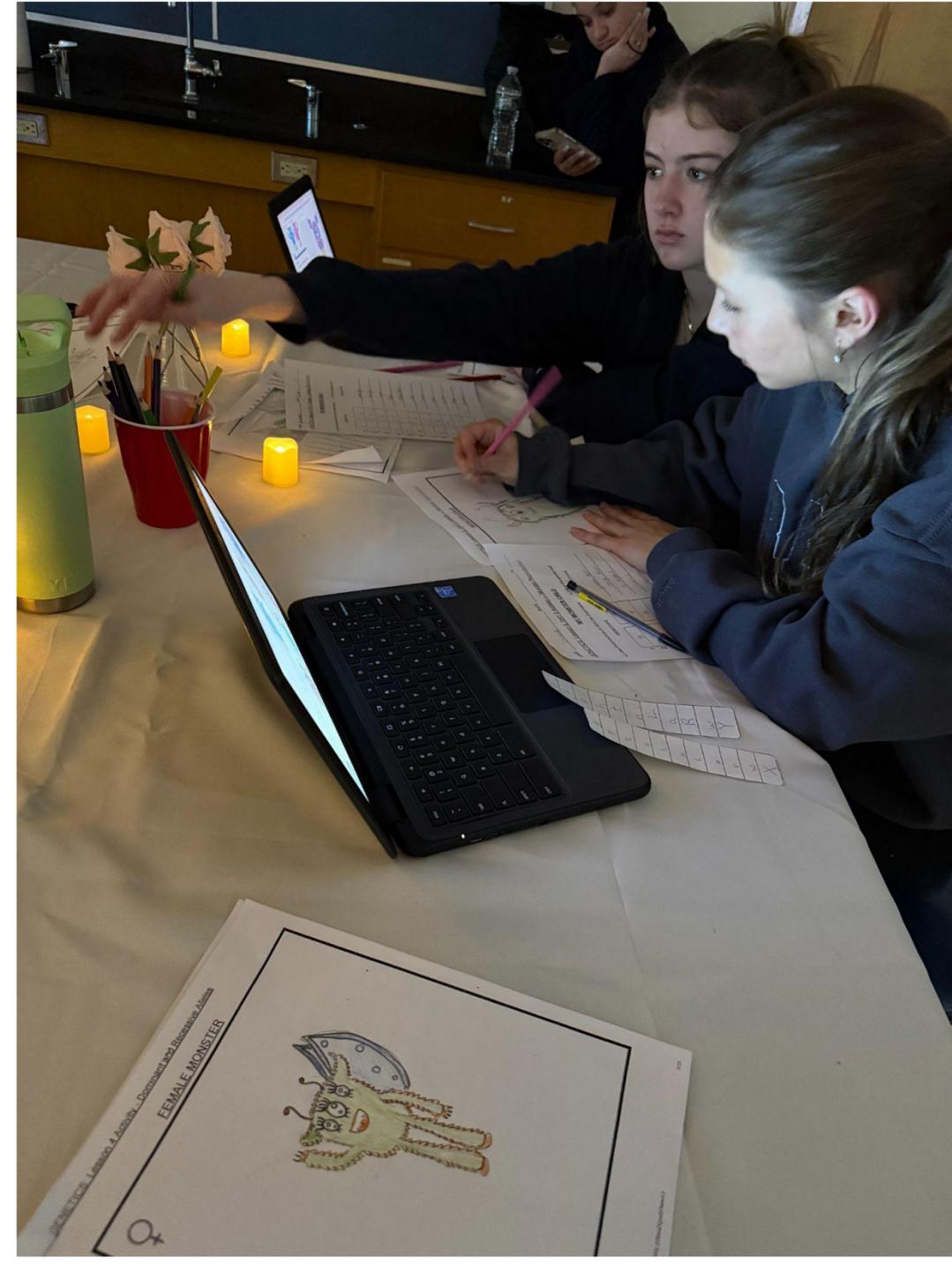
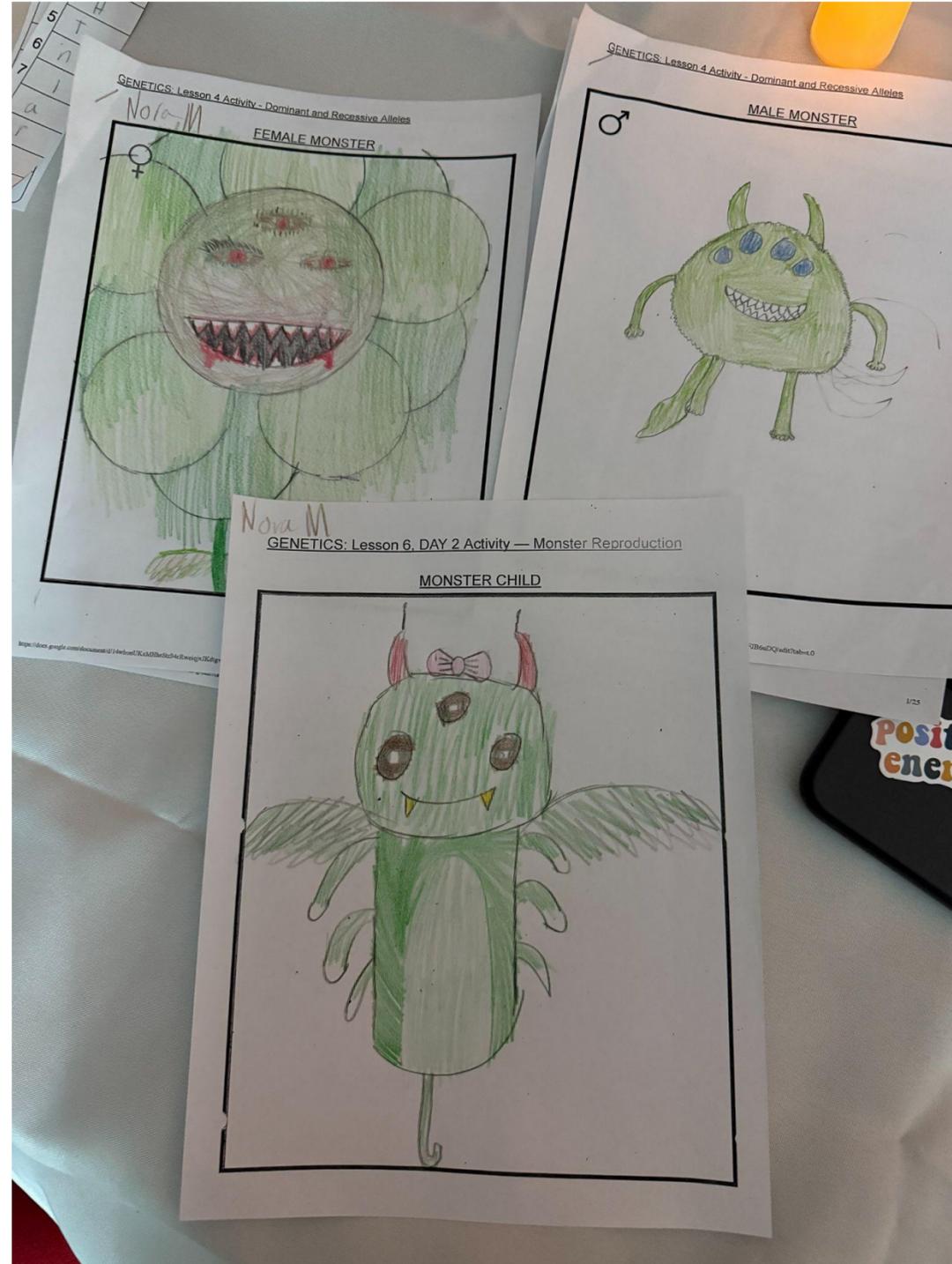
# Seen Around WPS...



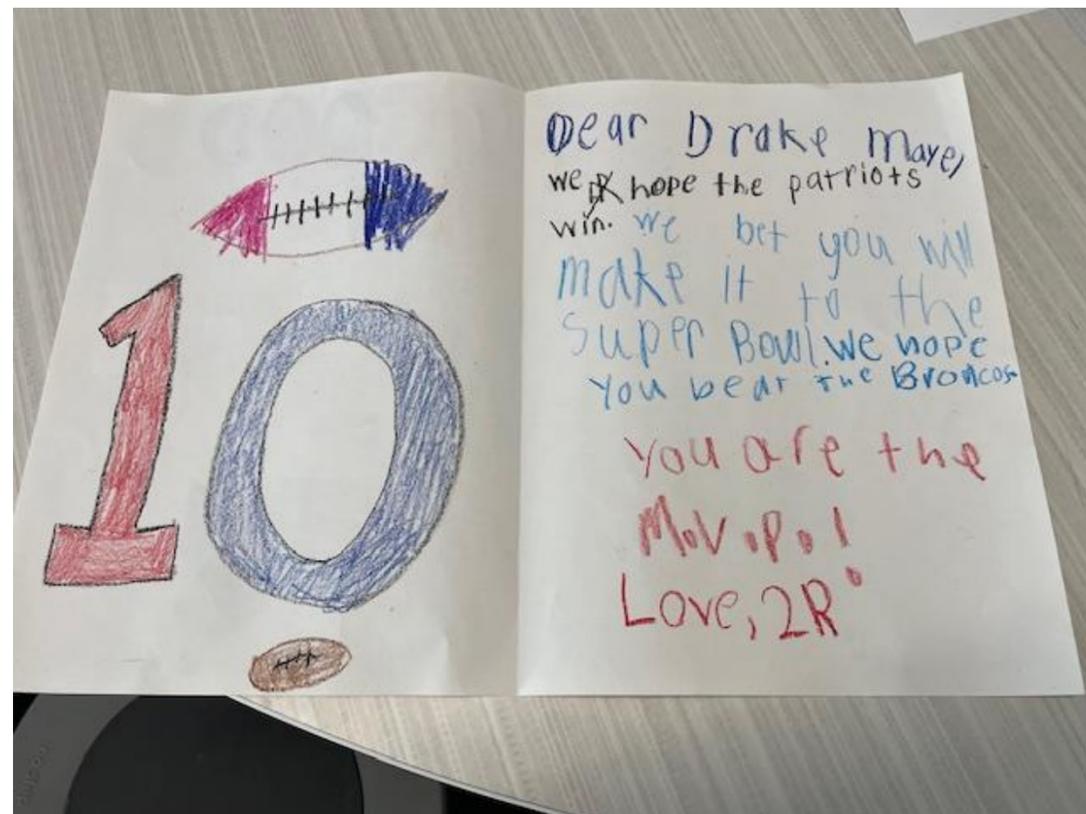
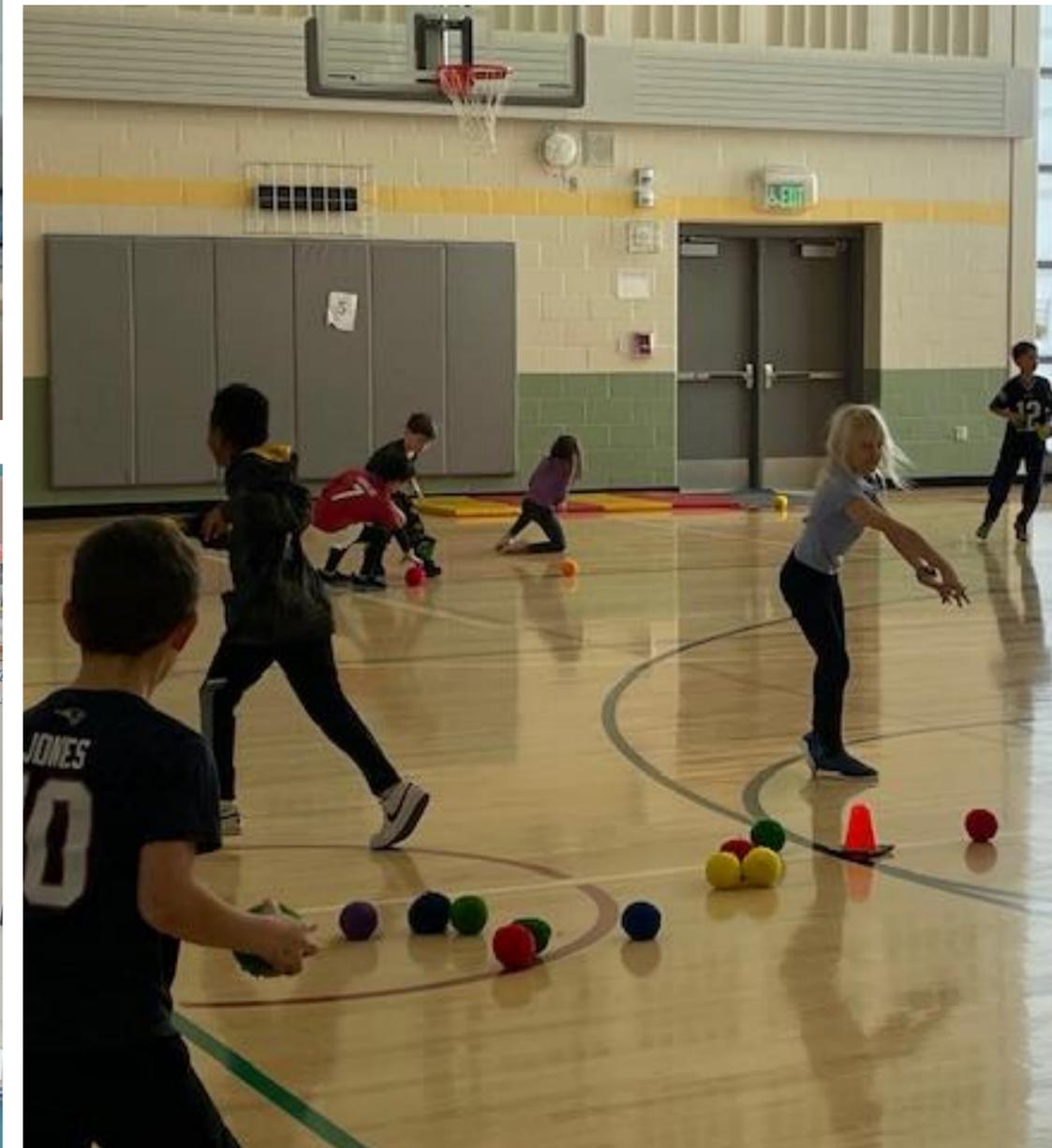
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# **Westwood Public Schools**

## **FY27 Proposed Budget**

**January 21, 2026**

**Building the *FY27***

**Proposed Budget**

# How did we build the proposed FY27 budget?

## Annual budget drivers for the WPS Operating Budget:

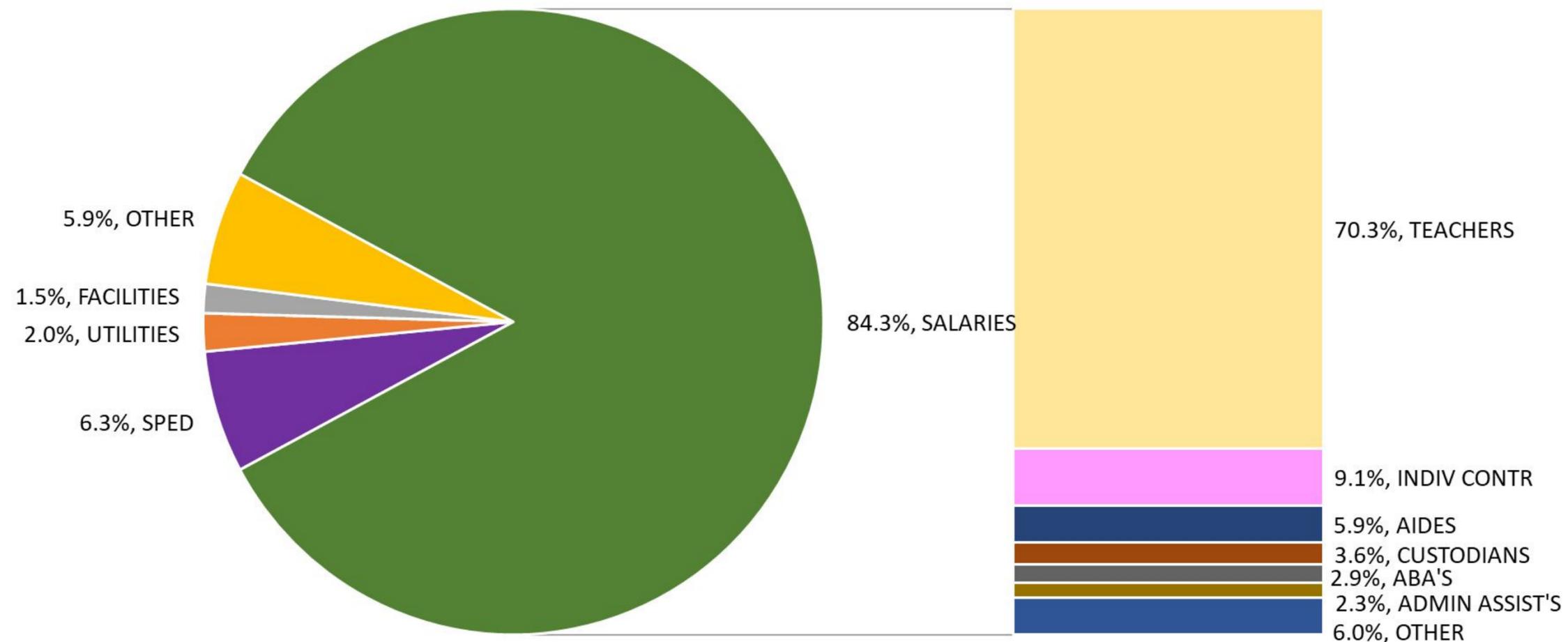
- Meet contractual salary obligations
- Meet other inflation-impacted costs (e.g., transportation, utilities)
- Address special education needs
- Continue to make progress on educational goals articulated in the 2025-2028 Strategy for District Improvement

# How did we build the proposed FY27 budget?

- Start with an a level-services budget by assessing salaries and fixed costs
- Respond to changes in enrollment patterns and student needs
- Identify strategic additions and/or reductions consistent with district goals
- Given the financial pressures in building the FY27 budget, we have approached reductions with the priority of preserving access to educational opportunities for students

# How did we build the proposed FY27 budget?

- Education is a “people business”, with 84% of budget dedicated to salaries



# Proposed FY27 Budget

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Level Services

- To determine the cost of maintaining level services, we identify what is required to maintain the existing educational and personnel infrastructure
  - Contractual salary obligations for existing staff
  - Known non-discretionary increases in transportation and tuition
  - For FY27, level services is also impacted by a reduction of federal grant funding for special education
- In order to maintain level services, the FY27 budget would require a 5.18% increase

# FY27 Proposed Budget - Challenges

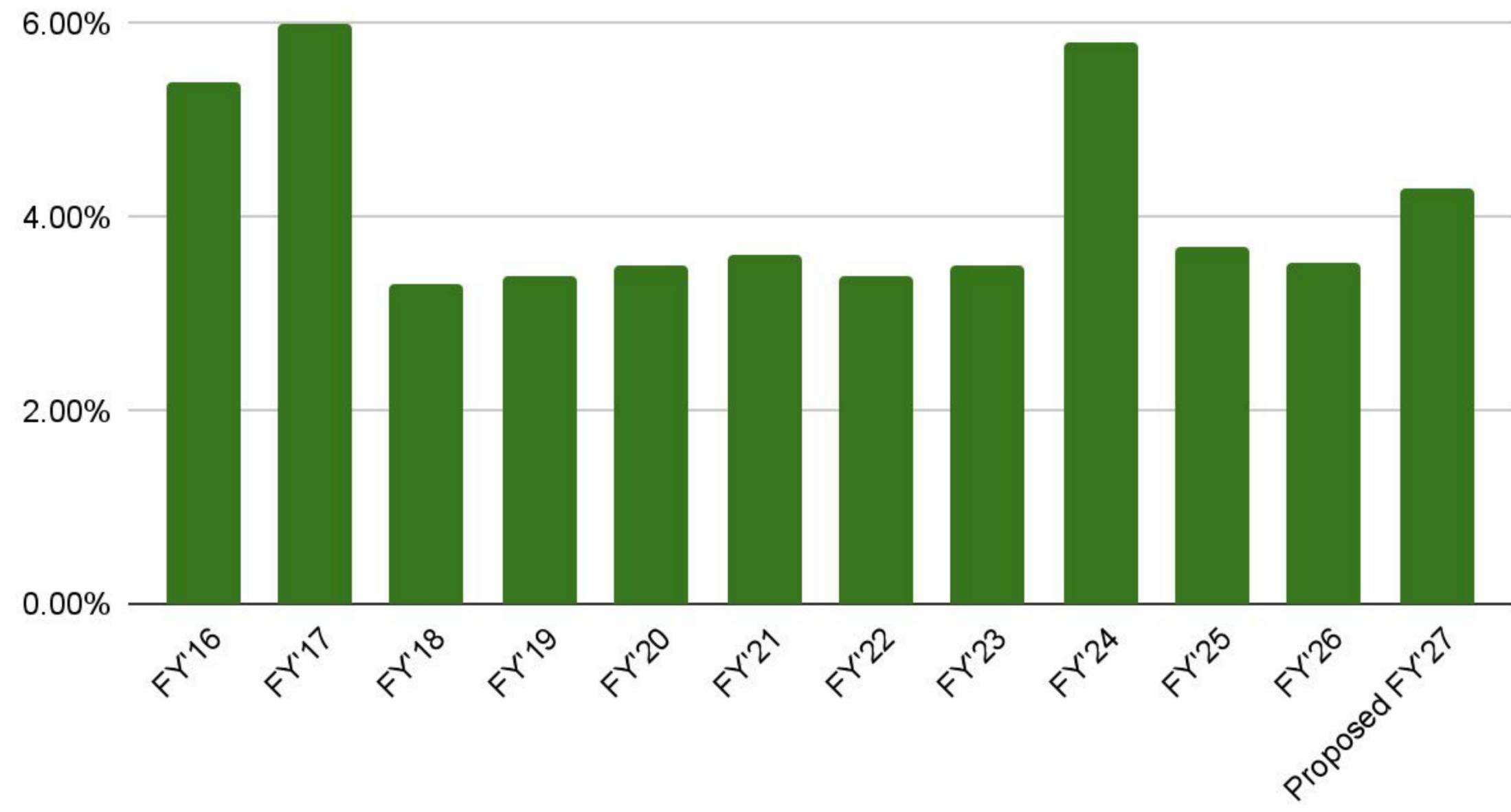
- The current economic climate presents real challenges and constraints on FY27 that significantly limit our ability to develop a budget consistent with our improvement efforts
- Proposition 2½ places an upper limit on the overall budget for school and municipal needs
- Continued increases in costs in the areas of health insurance (overall town budget) and special education (school budget) greatly reduces the amount of available funds for other priorities

# FY27 Proposed Budget Request

- FY27 proposed budget increase is 4.31%
  - This is substantially below the level services percentage of 5.18%
  - \$510,000 difference between level services need and the FY27 budget
- When combined with the need to make required staffing additions to ensure legal compliance with education regulations for special education and English Learner students, the result is that we have had to make material personnel reductions in other areas
- Proposed budget for FY27 is **\$61,296,182**

# FY27 Proposed Budget Request

## WPS Operating Budget % Increases



# FY27 Proposed Budget Request

<b>FY26 Budget</b>		<b>\$58,761,682</b>
Net increase for salaries for existing personnel		\$1,978,902
Special Education Reorganization	3.6 FTE	\$250,270
Other Staffing Changes	(6.2 FTE)	(\$661,020)
Net increase to various non-salary accounts		\$966,348
<b>Total Change</b>	<b>(2.6 FTE)</b>	<b>\$2,534,500</b>
<b>FY27 Superintendent's Proposed Budget</b>		<b>\$61,296,182</b>

# FY27 Proposed Budget Request - Categories

<b>Major Budget Category</b>	<b>Voted FY26 Budget</b>	<b>Proposed FY27 Budget</b>	<b>Incremental Change (\$)</b>	<b>Increment Change as %</b>
Total Salaries	\$50,128,551	\$51,696,703	\$1,568,152	3.13%
Non-Salary	\$8,633,131	\$9,599,479	\$966,348	11.19%
Special Education	\$2,931,392	\$3,863,901	\$917,478	31.14%
Utilities	\$1,202,182	\$1,202,182	-	0%
Facilities	\$924,335	\$924,183	(\$152)	(0.02%)
All other non-salary	\$3,565,441	\$3,609,213	\$49,022	1.38%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$58,761,682</b>	<b>\$61,296,182</b>	<b>\$2,534,500</b>	<b>4.31%</b>

# FY27 Proposed Budget Request - All Funds

<b>Major Budget Category</b>	<b>Voted FY26 Budget</b>	<b>Proposed FY27 Budget</b>	<b>Incremental Change (\$)</b>	<b>Increment Change as %</b>
Total Salaries	\$52,303,416	\$53,747,284	\$1,443,868	2.76%
Non-Salary	\$10,678,669	\$11,787,898	\$1,109,229	10.39%
Special Education	\$4,168,397	\$5,185,875	\$1,017,478	24.41%
Utilities	\$1,284,682	\$1,284,682	-	0%
Facilities	\$964,335	\$964,183	(\$153)	(0.02%)
All other non-salary	\$4,261,225	\$4,353,158	\$91,903	2.16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$62,982,085</b>	<b>\$65,535,182</b>	<b>\$2,553,097</b>	<b>4.05%</b>

# Special Education and Non-Salary Changes

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Special Education

- The most variable part of any district budget is special education
- Westwood has created several district-wide programs that allow us to educate almost all of our students in-district
  - In FY26, less than 1% of students attend out-of-district SPED placements
- Operational Services Division (OSD) has set a minimum 3.04% increase on school tuitions for FY27
  - 3.67% in FY26, 4.69% in FY25, 14% in FY24
  - Prior to FY24, 2-3% was the typical increase for tuitions
  - Individual schools can apply for larger increases, up to 20%

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Special Education Tuition

<b>Tuitions</b>	<b>FY'26</b>	<b>FY'27</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Residential Tuition</b>	367,286	317,839	(49,447)
<b>Day Tuition</b>	1,573,623	2,407,283	833,660
<b>Collaborative Tuition</b>	410,295	427,516	17,221
<b>Tuition Total</b>	<b>2,351,204</b>	<b>3,152,638</b>	<b>801,434</b>

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Special Education Transportation

<b>Transportation</b>	<b>FY'26</b>	<b>FY'27</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Out-of-District SPED Transportation</b>	629,156	780,930	151,774
<b>In-District SPED Transportation</b>	431,417	469,072	37,655
<b>Summer Out-of-District SPED Transportation</b>	69,092	66,226	(2,866)
<b>Summer In-District SPED Transportation</b>	45,677	75,159	29,482
<b>Transportation Total</b>	<b>1,175,342</b>	<b>1,391,387</b>	<b>216,045</b>

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Non-Salary

- Increase in Special Education Tuition and Transportation: \$917,478
  - Net impact of tuition, transportation, and Circuit Breaker offset
- Increase in Yellow Bus Transportation: \$48,688
  - Existing vendor contract for transportation
- Increase in Athletic Facility Rental: \$24,750
- Decrease in Athletic Supplies and Materials (accounting change only, tied to increased Athletic Fees): (\$14,734)
- Across-the-board 5% reduction in Conferences & Meetings, Dues & Memberships, and Other Expenses: (\$9,845)

# Revenue Assumptions

# FY27 Proposed Budget - Revenue

- Circuit Breaker
  - “Flattening” amount in Circuit Breaker offset rather than using previous year’s receipt, which are highly variable
  - Pushing forward excess receipts or borrowing from anticipated receipts to reduce fluctuation
  - FY27 offset is \$100,000 higher than FY26
- Grants
  - Decrease of \$178,154 in Federal IDEA Special Education grant
  - Decrease of \$971 in Early Childhood Special Education grant
  - Decrease of \$7,852 in METCO grant
  - Increase of \$4,282 in the Title II grant (follows reductions of over \$4,000 in FY23 through FY25)

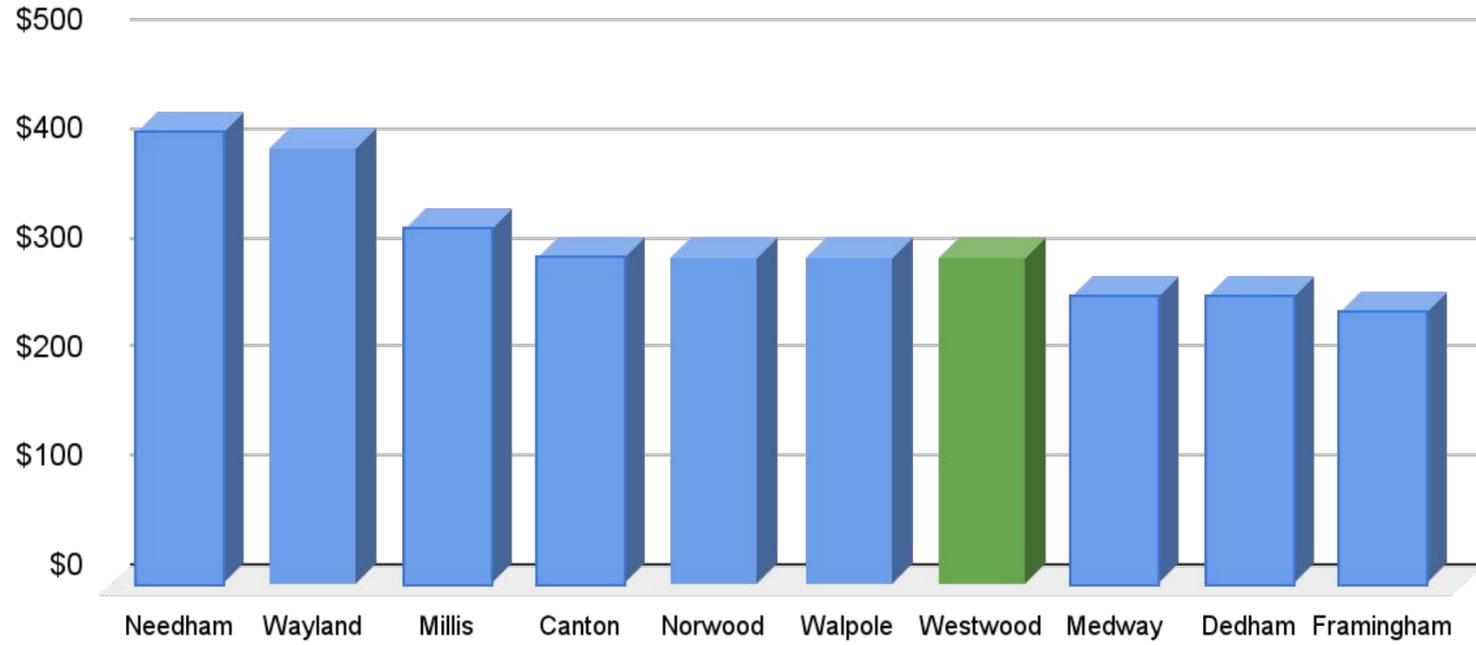
# FY27 Proposed Budget - Revenue

- Approximate 4% increase to Bus Fees, Athletic Fees, and Preschool Tuition
- Bus Fees: Change from \$290/student to \$300/student
  - Family cap increased by \$30/family per year
- Athletic Fees: Change from \$320/student to \$334/student for most sports
  - Family cap increased by \$56/family per year
- Anticipated revenue increase of \$29,226 from Bus Fees and Athletic Fees

# Bus Fees in Comparable Districts (TEC)

Bus Fee (FY'26)

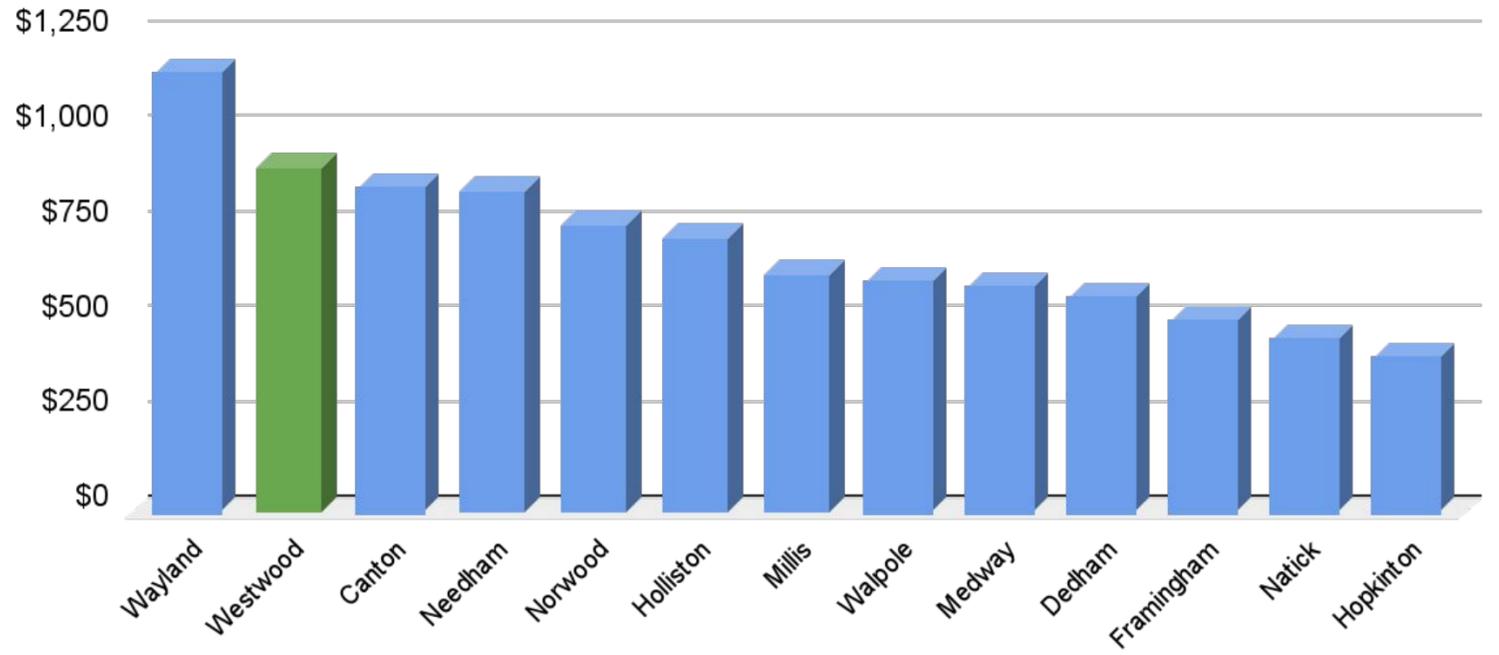
TEC Districts



Dover-Sherborn does not have bus fees. Medfield fees range 100-200 starting in MS.

Bus Fee - Family Cap (FY'26)

TEC Districts

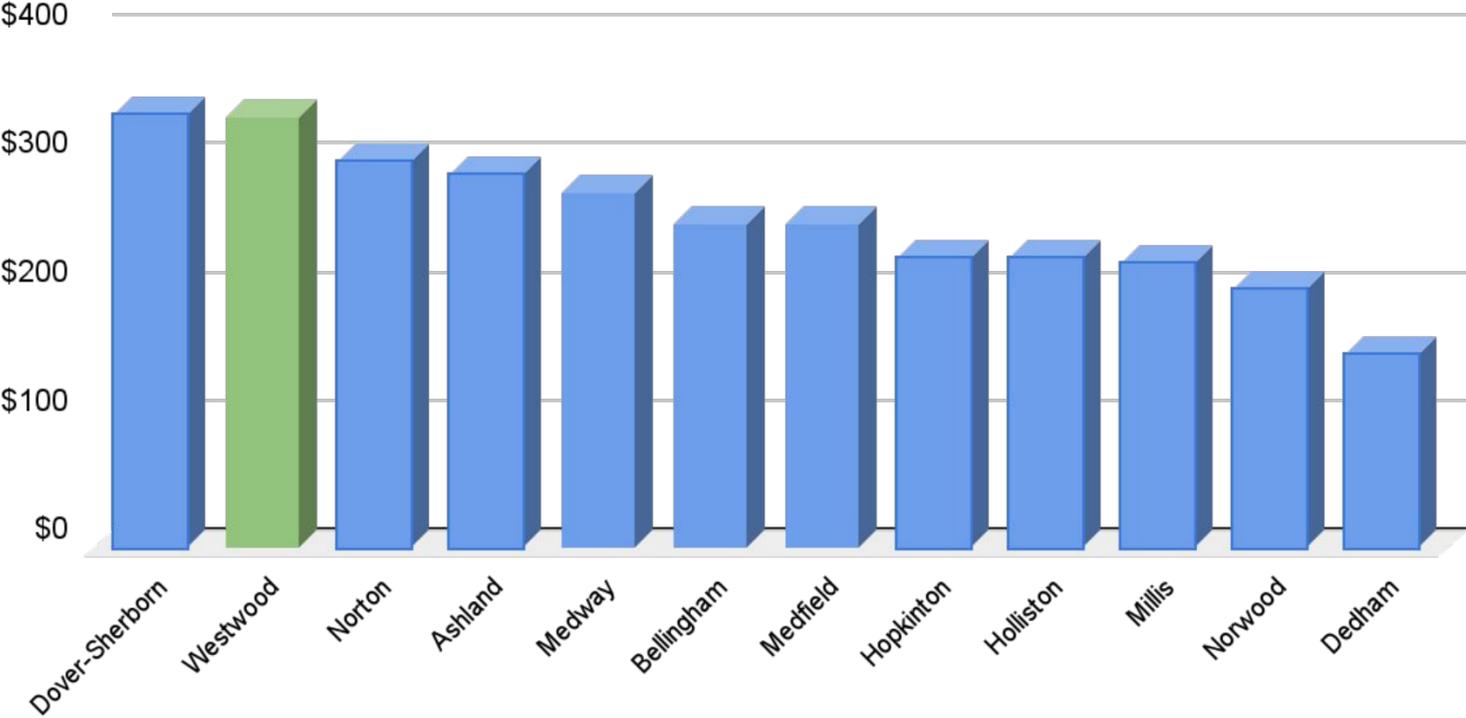


Dover-Sherborn, Medfield do not have caps.

# Athletic Fees in Comparable Districts (TVL)

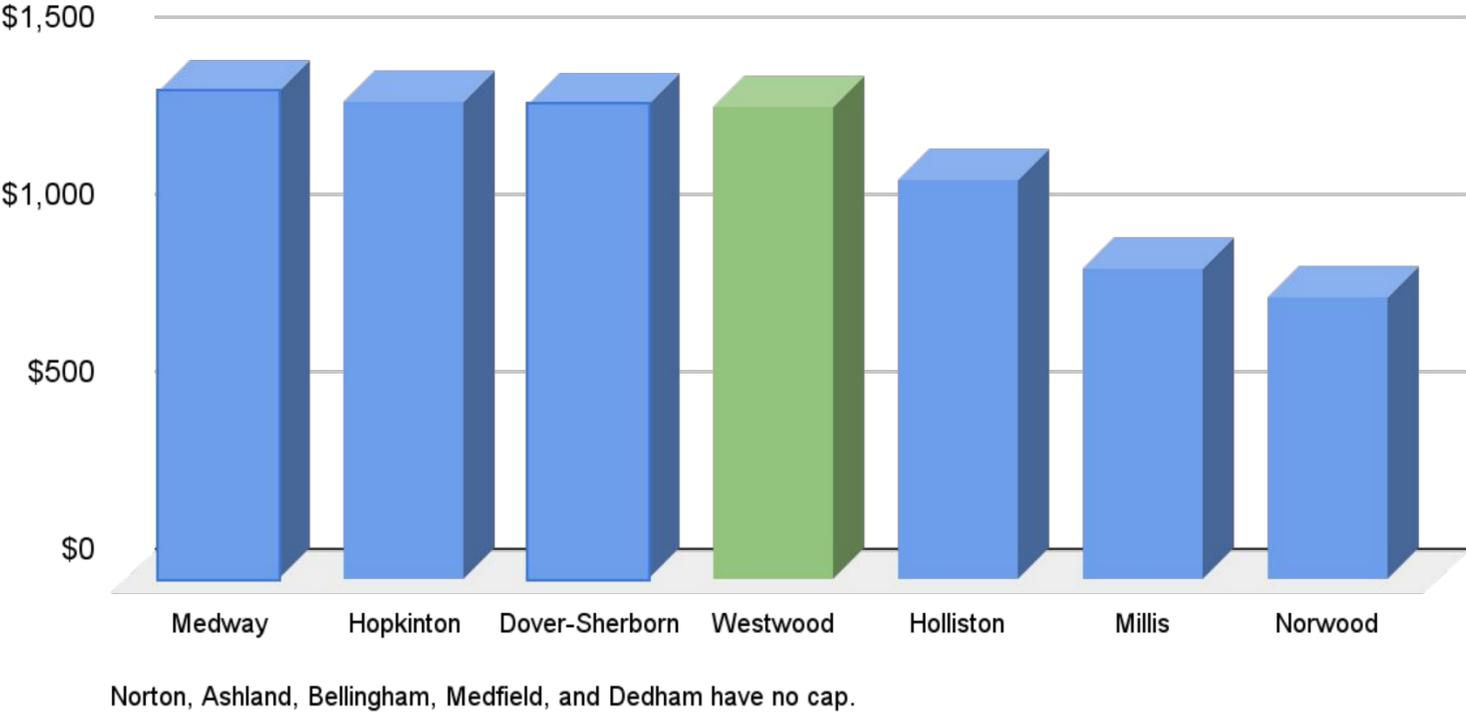
### Base Athletic Fee (FY'26)

Tri-Valley Districts



### Athletic Fee Cap (FY'26)

Tri-Valley Districts



# Enrollment Considerations

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Enrollment

- There is no significant change in FY27 enrollment at high school or middle school
- Overall elementary enrollment at the elementary level is relatively steady from FY26 to FY27
  - Number of class sections is determined not by overall enrollment, but by distribution across schools and grade levels
- Continued challenges with use of census data to predict incoming kindergarten enrollment

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Kindergarten

## Kindergarten Enrollment

### Difference Between Actual and Census Data by Year

	Eligible K Students in Town Census	Enrolled K Students (as of Oct. 1 report)	Difference (Actual to Census)
2019-2020	185	206	21
2020-2021	174	203	29
2021-2022	181	201	20
2022-2023	177	197	20
2023-2024	157	225	68
2024-2025	132	202	70
<b>2025-2026</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>62</b>

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Kindergarten

- In response to the unpredictability of kindergarten enrollment, in FY'25 we used the methodology of assuming level of staffing across schools for kindergarten sections
- Although this method was successful in FY'25, when used in FY'26 this led to the need to add a kindergarten section post-budget
  - This was not due to the overall number of students, but the distribution of students across schools
- To address this issue, we propose the introduction of “buffer zones” to our elementary school district maps for the 2026-2027 school year

# Buffer Zones

- Students who reside in buffer zones who are newly registering for school would be assigned to one of two identified schools, consistent with the goal of reducing the impact on class sizes
  - Prior to 2023-2024, University Station was identified as a buffer zone
- Buffer zones will be identified between each set of schools whose districts border:
  - Downey/Pine Hill
  - Martha Jones/Pine Hill
  - Martha Jones/Sheehan
  - Pine Hill/Sheehan

# Buffer Zones

- In Downey, Martha Jones, and Sheehan, the number of classes per grade level has varied between two and three sections annually, based on enrollment
  - This school year has two kindergarten sections at Sheehan, and three each at Downey and Martha Jones
- By instituting buffer zones for 2025-2026, this allows us to plan for a combined seven (7) kindergarten sections across Downey, Martha Jones, and Sheehan
  - FY27 budget identifies three kindergarten sections at Sheehan; final determination will be based on actual enrollment

# Staffing Changes

# Staffing Approach

- \$510,000 difference between level services need and the FY27 budget
- When combined with the need to make required staffing additions to ensure legal compliance with education regulations for special education and English Learner students, the result is that we have had to make material personnel reductions in other areas
- Given the financial pressures in building the FY27 budget, we have approached reductions with the priority of preserving access to educational opportunities for students

# Special Education / Preschool

- The proposed FY27 budget has been informed by our recent review of our special education programming in the district
- The review identified potential areas for revision and reorganization designed to increase educational outcomes and support long-term stability
- The proposed changes are intended to not only meet immediate compliance needs, but also to build long-term programmatic and structural capacity, and to reduce future budget volatility

# Special Education / Preschool

The proposed changes in the FY27 budget are driven by the following:

- Increased enrollment in the FOCUS program at Pine Hill over current capacity
  - Projected to be 13 students for 2026-2027
- Ongoing capacity issues with Westwood Integrated Preschool
  - Regulatory cap of 15 students; all current classrooms in excess
- Preschool WABA program location limits student integration opportunities
  - Currently located at Pine Hill

# Proposed Changes

- Addition of 1.0 FTE teacher for FOCUS at Pine Hill
- Addition of an integrated preschool classroom to be located at Downey
  - 1.0 FTE Teacher; 1.48 FTE Instructional Aides
- Relocation of the preschool WABA classroom from Pine Hill to Downey
- Consolidation of the PEER program from Downey to Martha Jones
  - Lower grade and upper grade classroom at Martha Jones

# Proposed Changes - FOCUS

- The increase in FOCUS enrollment means that the program has exhausted its current instructional and space capacity and can no longer effectively implement its specialized programming
- The addition of a 1.0 FTE teacher will address both instructional and space needs, with the new classroom to be located in the space currently be used by preschool WABA

# Proposed Changes - Preschool

- Since 2021-2022, out of fifteen total preschool classrooms (three per year), the district has exceeded the cap ten times
  - All three classes for 2025-2026 currently in excess, and the district has a continued obligation to meet the needs of any additional students identified as requiring special education services
- Opening a fourth integrated preschool classroom at Downey, and moving the preschool WABA classroom to Downey not only addresses the capacity issues in the preschool at WHS, but will also allow for integration of WABA students into an environment with age-appropriate neurotypical peers

# Proposed Changes - PEER

- The proposal to move a PEER classroom from Downey to Martha Jones will allow for improvement in student experience and instructional efficiency
- Improves age grouping alignment, with a younger grades and an older grades classroom
  - Younger grades can focus on unique social, emotional, and early academic needs for students within their cohort
  - Older grades can focus on increased academic demands and social dynamics
- Additional benefit from enhanced staff collaboration within the program

# Special Education / Preschool

- These changes are designed to bring stability to each of the programs by addressing not only current enrollment, but also anticipating future needs
- Recognizing the impact that these changes can have on students and families, we are committed to keeping these changes in place until we need to contemplate larger-scale redistricting in the future

# Additional Student Services Changes

To ensure that our staffing levels align with our legal obligations to meet students' educational needs, the FY27 budget also includes the following:

- Addition of a 0.6 FTE Psychologist at Pine Hill
  - Required to meet both testing and IEP service delivery needs of students
- Addition of a 0.8 FTE English Learner (EL) Teacher
  - Corrective action from recent DESE audit of EL programming in the district
  - Allows us to meet English language acquisition needs of students

# Additional Student Services Changes

- Addition of a 0.5 FTE Elementary Student Services Department Head
  - Brings greater consistency and oversight of special education in the district
  - One department head at Pine Hill; one for Downey/Martha Jones/Sheehan
  - Makes permanent Preschool Director/Out-of-District Coordinator as a 1.0 FTE
- Reduction of 1.0 FTE Thurston MS Special Education Teacher
  - Additional adjustment counselor staffing was added to TMS in FY26 to support the Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) program
  - Success of this addition, and analysis of service delivery, allows for a reduction without compromising student support

# Elementary Class Size

- School Committee policy establishes class size guidelines at the elementary level that recommend 18-22 students in Grades K-3 and 18-24 students in Grades 4-5
  - Policy identifies that these numbers are “guidelines rather than absolute limits requiring strict, literal adherence, and should serve as a guide for budgeting purposes and in response to the enrollment of new students into classes that are near or at the numbers...”
- In the current 2025-2026 school year, two grade levels are above guidelines:
  - Pine Hill, Grade 1: 24 students
  - Sheehan, Grade 5: 26 students

# Elementary Class Size

- Given the fiscal challenges in this year's budget, the proposed FY27 staffing includes the reduction of 3.0 FTE elementary classroom positions for the 2026-2027 school year
- The result of these reductions is that there will be one grade level in each elementary school that exceeds class size guidelines by up to two (2) students
  - Downey, Grade 4 (26 students)
  - Martha Jones, Grade 1 (22-23 students)
  - Pine Hill, Grade 2 (24 students)
  - Sheehan, Grade 5 (25-26 students)

# Proposed FY27 Budget - Enrollment

## FY27 Projected Enrollment and Classroom Sections by School/Grade Level

	<b>Downey</b>	<b>Martha Jones</b>	<b>Pine Hill</b>	<b>Sheehan</b>
Grade K	40 (2)	40 (2)	76 (4)	54 (3)
Grade 1	50 (3)	<b>45 (2)</b>	74 (4)	42 (2)
Grade 2	35 (2)	41 (2)	<b>96 (4)</b>	36 (2)
Grade 3	52 (3)	52 (3)	78 (4)	59 (3)
Grade 4	<b>52 (2)</b>	39 (2)	80 (4)	44 (2)
Grade 5	46 (2)	46 (2)	82 (4)	<b>51 (2)</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>275 (14)</b>	<b>263 (13)</b>	<b>486 (24)</b>	<b>286 (14)</b>

# Elementary Class Size

- The decision to propose a budget with elementary class size above School Committee guidelines is not taken lightly, and is only done in the context of the incredibly challenging financial situation for FY27
- If each of these grade levels were to be aligned with class size guidelines, it would require an additional 4.0 FTE, at a cost of over \$350,000
- To support these grade levels, we will be examining how we can provide additional support, as determined by student need
  - Includes how we deploy literacy, math specialists and/or IAs in each school

# Additional Staffing Changes

- Reduction of 1.0 FTE High School Math Teacher
  - Reduces number of math sections at WHS from 52 to approximately 49
  - Partial FTE may be restored to Math from Science
  - Maintains instruction/intervention models with manageable class size increase
- Reduction of 1.0 FTE Elementary Instructional Technology Coach (ITC)
  - Position added in FY25 budget, allowing for a weekly DLCS special in Grades 2-5
  - ITCs provide DLCS instruction to students and coaching/professional development to staff
  - DLCS student instruction maintained; reduced capacity for coaching and PD

# Additional Staffing Changes

- Reduction of 1.0 FTE Director of Social-Emotional Learning
  - Given the incredibly challenging fiscal climate, cannot financially sustain director-level position
  - District remains committed to importance of SEL
    - Core part of Strategy for District Improvement
    - Continuation of identified Staff Equity Leaders in each school
  - Reduction will have an impact on implementation and coordination; work this spring to identify how remaining structures can best support continued work

# Additional Staffing Changes

- Addition of 0.4 FTE High School Wellness Teacher
  - Second phase of plan started in FY26 for all WHS students to have yearly Wellness class
  - Ensures all students experience physical and social-emotional health benefits of wellness education
  - Supports all students to meet local and state graduation requirements
- Reduction of 0.38 FTE Science Materials Support Position
  - Position supports elementary science; will need to be absorbed by existing staff

# Additional Staffing Changes

- Reduction of 1.0 FTE High School Custodian
  - Eliminates position that is currently vacant
- Capturing Professional Staff Retirement Savings
  - \$91,000 in savings for FY27 from turnover savings
  - New provision in teacher collective bargaining agreement that incentivizes early retirement notification prior to the budget process

# Additional Staffing Changes

- Reallocation of Elementary Literacy and Math Specialists
  - No change proposed to staffing levels for literacy and math specialists
  - Commitment to allocating staff based upon student needs as identified through universal screens and other data
  - School-based budget lines consolidated into a district line in FY27
  - Follow-up discussion of allocations with School Committee in the spring

# Capital Budget

# Annual Capital Budget

Annual capital increase from \$1.14M to \$1.28M, with some shift of priorities between categories:

## CAPITAL BUDGET SUMMARY

Description	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Actual FY25	Actual FY26	Proposed FY27
Technology	130,000	120,000	150,000	100,000	180,000
Furniture, Fixtures, & Equipment	30,000	80,000	67,000	150,000	100,000
HVAC	200,000	132,000	200,000	100,000	0
Roofing	150,000	100,000	250,000	200,000	400,000
Building Improvements & Security	487,000	400,000	350,000	430,000	480,000
Copiers	20,000	60,000	0	0	30,000
Vehicles	0	125,000	0	160,000	90,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,017,000</b>	<b>1,017,000</b>	<b>1,017,000</b>	<b>1,140,000</b>	<b>1,280,000</b>

# Capital Budget

## Priorities for the Annual Capital Budget:

- 1-to-1 device refresh cycle in Technology for devices purchased 2020
- Restoring depleted funds in Roofing reserves and Building Improvements
- Multi-function student activity bus or van (in progress) and proposed food truck

## Other Capital Requests

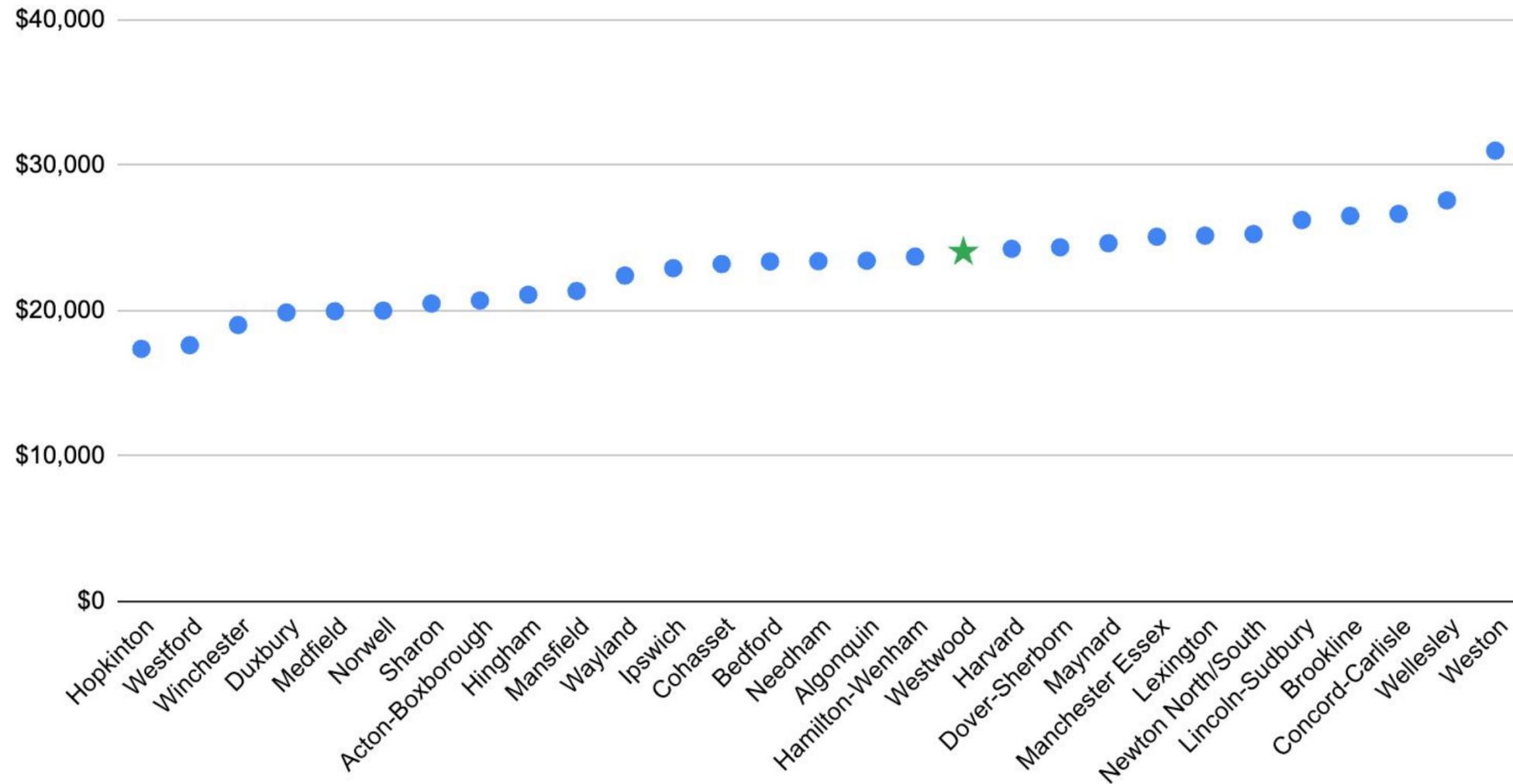
- HVAC improvements at Thurston to minimize risk and improve reliability (200K)
- Replace aging voice-over-IP (VOIP) phone controller at High School, which acts as relay for other buildings and replace Public Announcement (PA) system (180K)

# Comparisons and Future Priorities

# How does our Per-Pupil Spending Compare?

## Boston Magazine's Top Public High Schools (2025)

FY'23 Per Pupil Spending (most recent data available)



# Future Priorities

- Enrollment-driven increase in elementary classroom teachers
  - Desire to restore class sizes within guidelines for future budgets
- Expansion of Middle School World Language and Health
  - Requires an examination of middle school programming and scheduling
- Other recommendations from ongoing curriculum reviews
  - K-5 literacy, performing arts, visual arts, guidance
- District data analyst
  - Support for focus on data-based decision making
- Utility costs
  - New electricity contract and activation of solar canopy at WHS

# Next Steps

- School Committee Public Budget Hearing: **February 5, 2026**
- Finance Committee Presentation and Budget Hearing: **TBD**
- Annual Town Meeting: **May 4, 2026**