



January 16, 2025

On January 15th, I proposed my tenth budget as the Superintendent of the Ellington Public Schools. My budget proposal is one major part of a very long process that will hopefully conclude with a Town of Ellington budget passed by voters in the May referendum.

Last year's budget cycle was the first in more than a decade that saw Ellington residents vote down the initial budget referendum with the budget passing on the second vote. You can learn more about that here: [A Failed Budget, What Now? — Civility in 2024 and Town and School Districts Administration's Joint Letter—Budget Passes 2024](#).

From a historical perspective, in partnering with the Ellington Board of Education and the Town of Ellington, the school district's budget increases have been fiscally responsible and highly consistent with minimized variability—to the benefit of the taxpayer—while improving programming and services for students grades PreK - 12.

The 10-year average increase to the education budget has been 3.21% with the school district's "share of the pie" remaining constant fluctuating between 62% and 66% of the Town's overall budget. Ellington remains near the bottom of districts in the state for per pupil spending (2023-2024 ranking 149 of 166 districts) needing to spend an additional \$9.04 million, just to equal the state median spending.

Yet, most impressively, the Ellington Public Schools ranks second highest in the State of Connecticut in return on investment (ROI) relative to per pupil spending and academic achievement. No doubt, the school district's approach to budgeting, its staff dedication to the students and the Ellington Board of Education's approach to the pandemic are [paying huge dividends](#).

The Superintendent's proposed spending for 2025-2026 is \$48,200,266, which represents an increase of 3.18% over the current fiscal year.

In particular, this budget addresses several important points:

- Programs and services will be fully funded and continue to be improved.
- There are no new positions recommended for this budget.
- The last two years of 'right-sizing' accounts (i.e. athletics and facilities) have created less variance and more predictability for the budget this year and moving forward.
- The decade-long increase in revenue primarily by fiscally managing special education services coupled with an exceptional special education staff has resulted in an outstanding education for Ellington students and those students from surrounding towns who have tuitioned-in to our special programs. This has saved millions of taxpayer dollars over the years.

This budget represents not just the efforts of the Central Office, but a lengthy process involving staff, teachers, and administrators from our five schools and three programs. Each year they meet to consider the needs to run their programs in the coming year. The Board of Education heard a sliver of those discussions at a January 8th workshop with paraeducators and administrators with January 15th learning of the 3.18% proposed increase. They will learn more detailed info on January 18th with further meetings to be held for deeper level of engagement and questions.

Of course, Board of Education budget adoption—to occur prior to February 15th—is not the last step. There are further conversations—some difficult—to be had with the Board of Finance. But, this is what makes Ellington successful. In keeping with the [Seeds of Civility](#), we hear each other's truths and ultimately look for ways to assist each other in moving a whole budget forward.

Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools