



Hooksett School District Budget for 2023-24

Last month, the Hooksett School Board (HSB) proposed a \$38,691,306 budget for the upcoming fiscal year. At our October 25 budget workshop, which followed a presentation the prior week by school administration, the Board went through the 1,200 line budget line-by-line before approving it. The Board appreciates the considerable work by our school administration and staff diligently planning for next year. Budgeting is complicated by post-pandemic challenges finding certain staff and materials, and the concerning inflationary economic environment.

Next year’s “default budget” is the current budget plus contractual obligations, and is \$38,037,375. The “proposed budget” includes some additional requests of taxpayers. Both budgets have increased from the current year, but are still incomplete pending some final external estimates. Notable increases include:

1. Special education costs, both in number of students qualifying for services and cost of providing services. Special education plans are legal obligations, and are thus part of our default budget.
2. Health insurance
3. Transportation, given dramatic fuel cost increases and a bus driver shortage.
4. High School tuition

The budget has placeholders for several costs that were not yet solidified at time of approval, such as salaries, insurance, transportation, and high school tuition. The Hooksett School Board doesn’t yet have a new contract with the Hooksett Education Association (HEA) to follow the one ending in June, 2023, so potential staffing cost increases are not represented. The district just learned that health insurance costs will be up 10.3%. The three SAU15 school districts are negotiating a new transportation (bus) contract, so an estimated cost increase is represented, though Hooksett’s expected increase is lower than Auburn and Candia because Hooksett has consolidated some bus routes. Lastly, I was informed by Pinkerton Academy Trustees that our 5% placeholder for a tuition increase next year was below their latest forecasting.

Mitigating these increases somewhat is that the 20-year bond for David R. Cawley Middle School has been paid off, so the \$1 million bond payment in this year’s budget is not present next year.

The budget is broken down into such categories as regular education or special education. It’s further subcategorized by location, expenses for a specific school or district-wide, and purposes such as various staff expenses or types of materials. The top categories are:

Regular Education	\$17,442,000
Special Education	\$9,670,000
Transportation	\$2,353,000
Plant Operations	\$1,962,000
Psych/Speech/OT/PT	\$1,480,000
School Admin	\$1,391,000

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A different way of looking at the budget is by type of expenses. For school budgets, staffing is the largest expense, typically over 70%. For Hooksett, this includes salaries for about 220 employees, health insurance, employer contributions to New Hampshire Retirement System (approx. 20% of salary), other benefits, and employer-paid taxes on those salaries. We've also contracted for staff we don't employ directly. Here are some rough category sums from this budget:

Salaries*	\$9,300,000
Insurance	\$4,200,000
NH Retirement*	\$1,900,000
FICA*	\$800,000
Other professional services	\$1,600,000
SAU Services staff costs	\$700,000
Total	\$18,500,000

* Salaries, retirement, and FICA include some 2022-23 rates pending a new contract.

Tuition to other schools, including high schools and other schools for special education services, accounts for \$13 million of this budget. Thus, these staffing expenses are about 72% of the costs that remain. There are some others I've not included, for brevity.

Hooksett school district budget materials are available for your review online at:

<https://hooksettschoolboard.sau15.net/documents-reports>

School administration will give their first presentation of the Hooksett School District budget to the Hooksett Budget Committee on Thursday, November 10, who will be considering the budget over several of their upcoming Thursday meetings with our ex-officio members Jillian Godbout and Alexis Quinlan. School administration will return to the Budget Committee again in early December.

Pinkerton Academy Sending Schools Meeting

On October 27, I attended the Pinkerton Academy (PA) sending schools' meeting with their Board of Trustees. The PA Trustees meet three times a year with School Board Members and school administrators from towns sending students to PA. It was the first time this meeting was held in person in nearly three years. Pinkerton Academy now has two Trustees from Hooksett - Joann McHugh, a former Hooksett School Board Member, and Elise Harnisch who was recently appointed.

Hooksett is contractually obligated to send 63% of its eight graders to PA the following year for high school, and the average selection rate has been around 70%.

Pinkerton Academy's annual report and Treasurer's narrative is posted to their website, at <https://www.pinkertonacademy.org/about/annual-report>. A graph compares 2021 (prior year) PA Tuition of \$15,159 to the NH state average of \$17,758. The report cites a 2021-22 General Ed tuition of

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\$14,088, and an "all-in" tuition of \$16,052. It contains a high-level cost breakdown on the last pages, noting that salaries and benefits comprise 77.8% of the total.

Pinkerton Academy Trustees forecast a higher than usual increase in tuition rate. Part of this equation is increased expenses, the other is declining enrollment.

PA projects 69 students fewer next year than this year. Losing 69 students for 2023-24 at \$14,950 each (assuming current tuition + 5%) is a \$1,031,000 revenue reduction. Making up that revenue shortfall by the remaining 2,898 students results in a \$356 increase in tuition per student unless corresponding reductions in expenses are made.

We'll be expecting the final tuition rate after the Pinkerton Academy Board of Trustees' November meeting.

School Board Staff Engagement

Jillian Godbout, Amy Tremblay, and Jason Hyde collaborated to produce the next round of staff surveys. The Board is also working to schedule our next round of "Coffee with the Board", visiting school staff prior to the start of the school day, in late November. School Board Members received remarkably helpful perspectives and feedback from these conversations last spring.

Stay in Touch Online

You can find the School Board online at:

<https://hooksettschoolboard.sau15.net>

<https://facebook.com/hooksett.school.board/>

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne", written in a cursive style.

Wayne Goertel
Hooksett School Board Chair

The mission of the Hooksett School District is to develop a community of learners who are intellectually curious, resourceful, and respectful of self and others. Academic achievement, through constantly improving standards, is the District's highest priority.