

Hooksett School Board

Chair's Report

March, 2023



Special education expenses, trust funds, and operating budgets

At the February, 21, 2023 Hooksett School Board meeting, the Board held a public hearing to discuss and expend monies from two of our reserve funds:

- Special Education Expendable Trust Fund
- RSA 198:4-b II Retained Fund Balance

Special Education costs have risen significantly, because of an increase in the number of students being identified for services and increases in the cost of services per student. Related transportation costs, such as for travel for out of district services, are up, too. School districts in New Hampshire got a budget shock with New Hampshire passing SB-394 into law in June, 2022 which increased the age range of individuals qualifying for special education but without permitting a year for districts to budget for it.

Special Education costs are part of our default budget, not one of the additional discretionary items in the proposed budget, because they are contractually mandated. Thus, for students identified for these services, the forecasted expenses will be budgeted for the next school year – but this is forecasting a long way out. For 2022-23, additional expenses from SB-394 were not part of any budget, nor other needed services identified since the 2022-23 budget was created in October, 2021.

The meeting minutes capture an important point about revenue vs expense:

“Bill Rearick explained how revenue can't be used to offset expenses, so they must draw down from all available funds before going to the Department of Revenue, requesting the use of revenues. The available funds he requested were \$198,000 from the fund balance set-aside account and up to \$300,000 out of the Special Education trust Fund.”

Revisiting HEA contract details

Based on survey responses and other community feedback, the proposed three-year contract with HEA has been the subject of some concerningly persistent misinformation. The Hooksett School Board sent a letter to staff on March 13 to briefly summarize the school ballot, since all articles ultimately impact district operations and staff. It also provided more context about the proposed contract ratified by HEA, which has the unanimous support of the Hooksett School Board and the Hooksett Budget Committee.

One can read deliberative session guides for all the contracts for consideration on the March 28 ballot, but none explain, “what it means to employees, *specifically*.”

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Regarding salary: every step in the new salary chart increases more than \$5,800 over three years.

1. For staff three or more steps from the top of their salary chart lane, their salary will increase by over \$11,200. The value of each step will increase by more than \$5,800, and they will also receive \$1,800 per new step worth \$5,400.
 - a. For example, the salary for a teacher moving from MA step 11 to MA step 14 will increase from \$60,507 to \$71,830.
2. For staff currently at the top of their lane in the new chart, their salary will increase by more than \$5,800.
 - a. For example, the salary for a teacher at MA+30 step 21 will increase from \$80,724 to \$86,560.
3. For staff in one of the steps being eliminated, their salary will increase by over \$4,000 and they will receive \$4,755 in bonuses.
 - a. For example, the salary for a teacher moving from MA+30 step 22 to MA+30 step 21 will increase from \$82,530 to \$86,560, with \$4,755 in additional bonuses.
4. The district pays an additional 20% of the salaries for employer contributions to the New Hampshire Retirement System.

Regarding other contract details:

1. Defines School Nurse placement on the salary chart.
2. Removes language regarding the 2006-07 school calendar.
3. Increases the hourly rate for summer work, workshops, or other duty beyond the regular workday from \$25 to \$40/hour.
4. Any teacher with National Board Certification shall receive an additional \$2,500 stipend.
5. Revises formulation of duty schedules.
6. Specifies a late resignation penalty of \$1,000 for resignations occurring after August 1.
7. Revises definition of involuntary transfers.
8. After utilizing the sick leave bank for extended illness up to 60 days, provides a second opportunity to request up to an additional 60 days.
9. Allows up to six retirees to receive \$28,000 retirement bonus in a given year.
10. Increases employee portion of health insurance premiums, up to 20% for family & single+1 plans.
11. Increases the amount paid to employees not taking health insurance to \$2,500.
12. Increases stipends for co-curricular activities by 5%.

You can read the changes yourself at: <https://hooksettschoolboard.sau15.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/02/Hooksett-Education-Association-Tentative-Agreement-July-1-2020-through-June-30-2023.pdf>

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<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.