

Explanation of the FY23 School Budgets

Eight years ago the town asserted a commitment to good, local education by voting to have an independent district. At 1/3 of the total annual town budget, the school budget is rightly one voters monitor closely. The school committee members respect our responsibility to oversee the administration of the school and present to the town a budget that is as efficient and frugal as possible while meeting the needs of the particular students we have in our district each year. We have put together the following information to accompany the budget spreadsheet and explain some of the significant factors determining this year's budget request. Line item numbers refer to the line items in the budget spreadsheet.

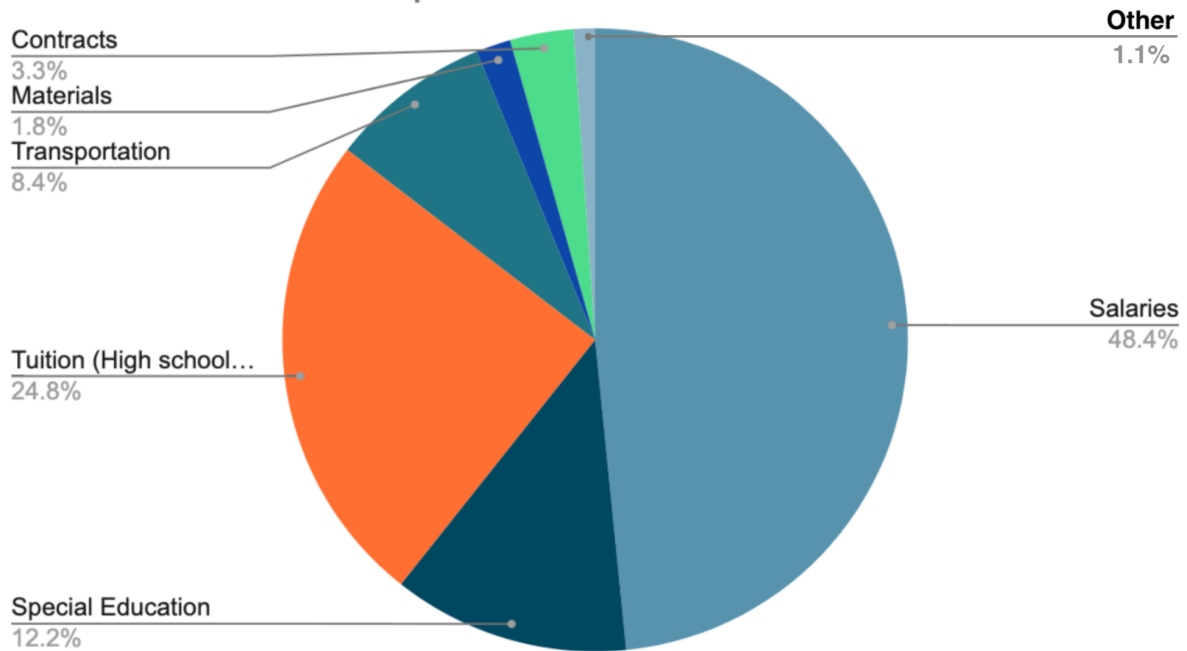
Using grant and other revenue to reduce the budget request

The Worthington district receives aid from multiple state and federal sources that help reduce the amount the town needs to raise through taxation to support the school budget. These grants and other revenue are listed at the bottom of the budget spreadsheet with an itemization of where they have been allocated to reduce line items in the budget.

One important source of funds continues to be our school choice income. The school committee voted last year to reserve one third of each year's school choice income in a revolving fund to cover unexpected special education costs. The remainder of funds are applied to various line items of the budget to reduce the request. This year Conwell had 14 school choice students, resulting in \$70,000 income. We anticipate a similar number of school choice students for FY23.

Last spring Worthington was also granted \$177,000 in one-time ESSER III pandemic relief funds to be spent before 9/30/23, with specific guidelines for the types of allowable uses for these funds. Over the winter the school committee approved plans to spend some of these funds for infrastructure upgrades at the school. But when it became clear that FY23 out-of-district special education costs will be unusually high for this one year, the committee agreed to reallocate most of the ESSER funds to offset allowable elementary costs, so that school choice funds would be freed to offset out-of-district costs.

RH Conwell FY 23 Expenses



FY 23 School Expenses

Salaries	\$794,769.53
Tuition (High school and Out of District)	\$406,875.00
Special Education	\$200,950.00
Transportation	\$137,500.00
Contracts	\$53,935.00
Materials	\$29,450.00
Other	\$18,125.00
Total Gross	1,641,604.53
Total Revenue	369,596.06
Total Town Approp.	\$1,272,008.47

Elementary Budget highlights

The Elementary Budget is the one the superintendent and school committee have direct control over, and is therefore the best place to manage costs. The total increase in the elementary request from FY22 to FY23 is 1.58%. It's also important to note that Worthington's per pupil cost is lower than surrounding districts.

Per-Pupil Cost Comparison - FY2020, the most recent data available from DESE

District/Town	In-District Per-Pupil	Total Per-Pupil including out-of-district costs
Central Berkshire	\$16,432	\$16,065
Chesterfield-Goshen	\$19,916	\$18,484
Gateway	\$18,784	\$17,770
Southampton	\$12,531	\$13,181
Westhampton	\$18,624	\$18,416
Williamsburg	\$19,522	\$18,839
Worthington	\$15,900	\$13,646

Preschool, included in Lines 20, 21, 22: Conwell had 10 full time preschool students in the 2021–22 school year. 22 students have applied to attend in 2022–23. The program will continue to be free in order to be accessible to all Worthington families and to prevent the district having to pay out-of-district costs for preschool special education. Priority will be given to existing preschool students and incoming Worthington students before students from other towns.

Lines 21 and 22: Elementary Aides and Special Education Aides. The multi-grade education model at Conwell is made possible only by Elementary Aides/Paraprofessionals teaching alongside the classroom teachers in teams. This model allows Conwell to hire almost half as many classroom teachers as would be necessary with single-grade classrooms. These line item increases reflect necessary new paraprofessional hires to fulfill the special education plans for next year's students and also reflect the new salary schedule negotiated this spring to replace the schedule that expires in June. The modest raise in starting salary may help attract and retain the very skilled aides Conwell is so fortunate to have, especially given the nationwide educational hiring shortages.

Line 23: Elementary Interventionist. This line is wholly offset with Title 1 and REAP funds. The Interventionist will provide additional targeted services to students who need extra help to meet their learning goals. This support has been especially important after the COVID pandemic interference in learning.

Line 48: Enrichment. Conwell continues to provide an after-school enrichment program to all students, now 5 days per week during the school year and for 4 weeks during the summer. It is almost entirely funded by grants. The program director, Shannon Madden, succeeded in securing the highly competitive 5-year 21st-Century grant from DESE that funds \$150,000 per year for the first 3 years, with decreased funding for years 4 and 5. This allows Conwell to offer the after school and summer programming free to all students. The grant requires the District to make a “good faith” contribution to the enrichment program, so the budget reflects \$5,000 of district funding, offset by school choice funds.

Secondary Education

Line 49: Hampshire Regional. This line is a per-pupil cost and cannot be adjusted by the school committee or superintendent. It reflects an increase in the total number of students (25) who plan to attend Hampshire Regional this fall for grades 7–12 under the tuition agreement between Worthington and Hampshire Regional. We are entering the 2nd year of a 5-year tuition agreement. The two districts negotiated a 10% annual increase in the tuition for years 1–3 of the agreement to “correct” for 6 years of no increases, and then will revert to a 5% annual increase for the last 2 years of the agreement. Worthington will pay \$9,075 per student in FY23. Hampshire Regional High School’s per-pupil cost was \$18,313 in 2020.

Out-of-District Services and Special Education Summer School

Lines 52–55. These lines are for necessary special education services to Worthington students that cannot be provided at Conwell or Hampshire Regional during the school year. They are services required by students’ special education plans and Worthington is legally obligated to provide them. Each year the costs are determined by the particular needs of the individual students living in Worthington. FY23 costs are unusually high. While the Worthington student population changes all the time and we cannot predict future years with certainty, we anticipate these line items will be lower in FY24.

Building Budget

Our Conwell office administrator and building custodian collaborate to run a very tight ship. Most line items in the building budget reflect a simple 1.5% increase for inflation. Given the recent increase in oil prices, the school committee approved an additional \$1,000 for line 13, heating oil, in order to compensate for possible higher heating costs next winter.

Cafeteria Table Update

On a final positive note, we are not returning to ATM with another request to fund replacement tables for the Conwell cafeteria, because Superintendent Morse-Dobosz was able to secure a donation of gently used tables from another MA district. Free! Thank you!