

SIMSBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING  
February 11, 2025  
BOE Conference Room  
6:30 p.m.  
AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- III. RECOGNITION
- IV. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- V. COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS
- VI. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
  - A. Approval of Minutes of January 28, 2025 EXHIBIT I
  - B. Personnel EXHIBIT II
  - C. Approval of Gift from Ensign-Bickford EXHIBIT III
- VII. INFORMATION AND REPORTS
  - A. 2025-26 Budget EXHIBIT IV
  - B. Quarterly Budget Analysis EXHIBIT V
- VIII. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- IX. FUTURE BUSINESS
  - A. Next Board Meeting, Tuesday, February 25, 2025,  
BOE Conference Room

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**TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

January 28, 2025

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Board of Education conference room.

Roll Call:

**Members present:** Mmes. Jen Batchelar, Tara Willerup, Sharon Thomas and Jessica Parise. Messrs. Jeff Tindall, Brian Watson and Josh Falco

**Members absent:** Ms. Lydia Tedone

**Also present:** Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether, BOE Student Representative Macy Goetz and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

RECOGNITION

Ms. Krasula stated that the Farmington Valley Transition Academy (FVTA) is a collaboration between Simsbury and Farmington Public Schools and moved into a new location this fall. FVTA focuses on developing transition skills for students with developmental disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22. Ms. Krasula introduced Program Director Emily Barrett and program special education teacher Maryann Schuppe, as well as the students in attendance. Ms. Barrett spoke about how the community at Riverdale Farms has embraced the program and some businesses are providing internships for students.

Recognition

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Goetz stated many of the choral and band concerts are finished. Parent conference were held at HJMS. The winter musical at SHS starts on Friday.

Communications

Mr. Falco stated that the parent conferences at HJMS were a great value added. He reported on the Communications Committee meeting which covered the topics of the next Vision of a Graduate video, the return of The Communicator publication and the upcoming budget mailings. He noted that The Communicator is mailed to all Simsbury households covering a variety of topics relative to the school district. The first budget mailer will go out prior to the BOF Public Hearing and the second mailer prior to the referendum.

Ms. Thomas questioned the amount of federal funding effected by the federal grant freeze. Ms. Willerup reported that the Simsbury Free Library was home to a group of students who worked with the U.S. Navy on DEI programming and they were interviewed by CBS. She noted the town-wide MLK Jr. celebration that was held on January 20.

Ms. Meriwether reported on the Finance Committee meeting where a high level overview of budget items, fixed costs and reductions were discussed. She noted that

our special ed excess cost grant will see a reduction of \$400,000 from last year.

Mr. Tindall stated that a presentation of 2 Farms Village Road was given to the Board of Finance last week. The BOF will hold a Public Hearing on the proposed property purchase. Mr. Tindall stated his appreciation for the collaboration of the BOS, BOF and BOE who are in agreement on the goals of the program. Mr. Tindall reported that the Charter Revision Commission has met 3 times and will be hearing from each of the 3 boards on any suggested revisions to the Town Charter.

Ms. Lemke stated that the District Strategic Plan work is wrapping up and will come before the board for approval this spring.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

#### A. Approval of Minutes of December 10, 2024 Meeting

Ms. Batchelar: MOVE to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

#### B. Personnel

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Board of Education accept the resignation of Carli O'Connell effective December 20, 2024.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

### INFORMATION AND REPORTS

#### A. 2025-26 Budget

Ms. Meriwether presented a high level overview of the 2025-26 budget relative to fixed costs, possible reductions, operations and special education. Katie Krasula, Director of Pupil Services, provided a special education program review. She noted this year's celebrations that include the opening of the new FVTA location and changes to the Intensive Learning Needs (ILN) program. She stated that special ed met the requirements for the CT Annual Performance Report in 2023 and the results for 2024 are pending. Ms. Krasula noted that 17 indicators create the State Systemic Improvement Plan that measures district special ed performance.

Ms. Krasula reviewed the teaching and learning work of the year relative to the strategic plan. She stated that a review of our special ed program was conducted by Specialized Strategies Consulting. The purpose of the review was to ascertain the current strengths and needs of the department to best support students, their families and staff. Ms. Krasula discussed the review process. Commendations in the report include collaborative and student focused teams, improvements to the ILN program structure, and the increase in staffing to support students with disabilities. Recommendations in the report include in-district behavioral programming, data collection, related services staffing, and vertical alignment of services and programs across the district K-12. Ms. Krasula stated that districtwide we want to ensure consistency for the elementary schools and we have a plan on how to collect and review data. Ms. Lemke noted that the recommendations are reflected in the new

Approval of  
Minutes of  
December 10,  
2024

Personnel

2025-26 Budget

strategic plan.

Mr. Falco asked if there was a common theme from the parent focus groups. Ms. Krasula responded that parents feel supported by teacher and appreciate the response time. Parents have a desire to find a community in special ed, which is something the department is working on. They would also like clear entrance and exit criteria for specialized programs such as ILN and Pathways.

Ms. Krasula addressed a comparison of enrollment increases over the past 6 years. The increase in total number of students is .89% while the increase in special ed students is 19.51%. Ms. Krasula stated that out-of-district enrollment is consistent for the third year with approximately 40 outplaced students. She pointed out that tuition rates for out-of-district students are increasing 5-15% annually which amounts to a 7-10% increase in her budget.

Ms. Krasula reviewed the responsibilities for non-public schools in the district. She noted that there are 5 non-public school partners in Simsbury. Simsbury Public Schools has an obligation to evaluate, identify and case manage any student residing or attending school within the town. She pointed out the caseload and evaluation increase over the past 3 years which have put a strain on our resources. In response to Ms. Parise, Ms. Krasula stated that 75-80% of the evaluations result in students needing services. She pointed out the related service support required for these cases. Ms. Krasula noted that the average speech and language pathologist caseload is 45 in Simsbury, the average for the state is 33. Ms. Parise requested cost information for these non-public school services.

Ms. Krasula addressed the Functional Academic Learning Programs (FALP) at SHS and HJMS. There are currently 15 cases at SHS and 9 cases at HJMS. These are students from the ILN program. Ms. Thomas asked if we have the skill base to support the needs of these students? Ms. Lemke noted that it is a moving target and Ms. Krasula looks at the population and how we need to staff it.

Ms. Krasula presented the special ed budget considerations for 2025-26. These include out-of-district tuition funding and staff requests. Ms. Krasula reviewed the funding sources for special ed, noting that this year the excess cost grant funding has decreased by \$400,000. Mr. Tindall pointed out the legislative obligation for excess cost is 80-85% reimbursement and this year it is 59%, decreasing by 20% over the past 3 years. Mr. Falco suggested this reduction should be considered a fixed cost.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the post COVID K-12 enrollment, noting that enrollment has increased at the elementary level and HJMS, while decreasing at SHS. He discussed staffing for the same time period, stating that even with flat enrollment there has been an increase in special education needs.

Mr. Sullivan addressed elementary classroom teacher staffing, noting that we are projecting one less teacher at each Central School and Tootin' Hills School. These positions will be captured through retirements. Elementary staffing requests include the addition of 1 reading teacher and a .2 strings teacher. These requests, offset by the reduction of 2 teachers, results in a budget impact of -.80% or -\$133,233.

Mr. Sullivan stated that there are few changes at HJMS so staffing will remain flat. At SHS the plan is to capture 2 retirements by looking for efficiencies in larger

departments which results in a budget impact of -\$250,000.

Mr. Sullivan addressed the special ed staffing requests which include 1 non-public school psychologist/PPT facilitator, 2 related service providers (1.4 SLP, 0.2 PT, 0.4 OT), and 1 FALP/reading special ed teacher. These 4 positions come with a cost of \$414,320. Mr. Sullivan stated that smaller non-certified requests will only be approved if there is an equal offset. He noted the need to monitor and adjust to labor market trends for lower wage positions in the district.

Ms. Batchelar requested a list of the total positions added over the past 4 years, and the caseload numbers of neighboring districts. She questioned why the addition of a reading teacher is only requested for Central School. Mr. Sullivan responded that the principal proposed an innovative program that could allow us to move other reading resources at the school. Ms. Krasula noted that this position would meet the needs at Central School. Ms. Batchelar requested comparative data of the reading resources at each of the schools.

#### PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Ms. Willerup thanked Tariffville School students for the winter scene cards they made for board members.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

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Sharon Thomas  
Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Katie Wilde  
Recording Secretary

Public Audience

Adjournment

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education  
FROM: Matthew T. Curtis  
DATE: February 11, 2025  
RE: Personnel Recommendations

**I. Retirement**

**Sharon Geoghan**

Experience 23 years

Assignment Family & Consumer Science, Henry James Memorial School

Effective June 30, 2025

**BOARD MOTION:**

“MOVE that the Board of Education accept the retirement of Sharon Geoghan effective June 30, 2025.”

**II. Notice of Retirement**

**Bruce Corbett**

Experience Currently 29.5 years

Assignment Math Teacher, Simsbury High School

Effective June 30, 2026

**BOARD MOTION:**

“MOVE that the Board of Education accept the notice of retirement of Bruce Corbett effective June 30, 2026.”

MC:cdf

## EXHIBIT III

TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: February 11, 2025

RE: Gift from Ensign-Bickford Aerospace & Defense Company

In keeping with the Board of Education Policy 2311, Gifts from the Public, Board approval is required for any gift to the school system which exceeds \$1,500.

The administration is requesting Board of Education approval of a renewable gift of \$12,500 to STEM K-12 to be used to support the Vision of the Graduate competencies. This is the third year of the donation, which will support critical thinking, communication, collaboration, self-directed learning, innovation, and global citizenship and the technology department vision.

“MOVE that the proposed gift of \$12,500 to STEM K-12 from the Ensign-Bickford Aerospace & Defense Company be accepted.”

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education  
FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools  
DATE: February 11, 2025  
RE: Superintendent's 2025-26 Budget

On Saturday, February 8th during the Board of Education Budget Workshop I had an opportunity to present the operating budget for 2025-2026. The presentation addressed the budget context, balancing fiscal reality with our vision for continuous improvement, the financial drivers of the budget, as well as the funding necessary to address the needs of the school system.

Based upon input from the Board of Education members at the Board of Education Budget Workshop, the administration and the Board of Education members will be discussing the following at tonight's meeting.

1. The budget, as presented by the Superintendent, has an increase of \$3,753,749 or 4.37% over last year's operating budget.
2. The budget with potential reductions would lead to an increase over last year's operating budget of 3.91%. Those reductions total \$400,000
3. The increase in Educational Cost Share: The State of CT has increased ECS funding by \$845,554. This marks a significant increase to the funding. The state has placed restrictions on the ECS funding that have not existed in prior years.
  - Funding needs to be used for direct support to classroom instruction.
  - If the District is allowed to supplant the current operating budget, the overall budget could be reduced by the total of the increase in the grant 845,554 or .91%.

Adoption of the Board of Education budget will be voted upon at the February 25, 2025 Board of Education meeting.

MTC:kdw



**Board of Education Budget Scenarios**

**Scenario 1 - Base Categories**

	<b>FY25</b>	<b>FY26</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>% Variance over Total Budget</b>
<b>Revised Fixed Costs (Inc Utilities)</b>				
Salaries & Benefits	57,357,903	59,386,791	2,028,888	2.36%
Contingency	-	321,520	321,520	0.37%
Health Insurance	10,340,330	10,847,006	506,676	0.59%
Pension (DB Plan)	1,446,900	1,471,907	25,007	0.03%
Utilities	1,725,892	1,944,860	218,968	0.26%
<b>Total Revised Fixed Costs</b>	<b>70,871,025</b>	<b>73,972,084</b>	<b>3,101,059</b>	<b>3.61%</b>
<b>Possible Reductions</b>				
Position Cuts/Retirements (4.0) @ \$125K	-	(500,000)	(500,000)	-0.58%
Insurance	-	(1,072,785)	(1,072,785)	-1.25%
<b>Total Possible Reductions</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,572,785)</b>	<b>(1,572,785)</b>	<b>-1.83%</b>
<b>Operations</b>				
Food Services Director	8,896	93,531	84,635	0.10%
Overtime	285,160	305,160	20,000	0.02%
Health Insurance - Retiree	580,651	693,414	112,763	0.13%
Pension	280,000	415,649	135,649	0.16%
Life/Disability/Wellness	181,103	197,592	16,489	0.02%
LAP/Workers Comp Insurance	606,103	624,502	18,399	0.02%
Copiers	137,304	163,179	25,875	0.03%
Library Books & Databases	39,700	93,116	53,416	0.06%
Software and Licensing	656,106	674,189	18,083	0.02%
Regular Transportation	1,538,122	1,629,849	91,727	0.11%
Fuel	162,006	236,190	74,184	0.09%
SPED Supplies	96,895	139,074	42,179	0.05%
Equipment Replacement	550,530	604,000	53,470	0.06%
Student Activities (Clubs/Athletic Trainer)	874,350	954,070	79,720	0.09%
Maintenance of Plant	839,565	958,839	119,274	0.14%
Snow Removal	85,000	100,000	15,000	0.02%
Custodial Supplies	255,500	281,761	26,261	0.03%
CNR	550,300	550,300	-	0.00%
Bus	-	140,000	140,000	0.16%
Misc Small or Zero Increases	4,618,755	4,645,949	27,194	0.03%
Use of Non-Lapsing/Grants	(1,877,878)	(1,697,179)	180,699	0.21%
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>10,468,169</b>	<b>11,803,185</b>	<b>1,335,016</b>	<b>1.56%</b>
<b>Special Education</b>				
Out of District	4,817,174	5,254,793	437,619	0.51%
Hold Harmless (Excess Cost)	-	(411,000)	(411,000)	-0.48%
Excess Cost	(2,400,000)	(1,989,000)	411,000	0.48%
Special Education Transportation	1,701,000	2,075,840	374,840	0.44%
Contracted Services	349,000	427,000	78,000	0.09%
<b>Total Special Education</b>	<b>4,467,174</b>	<b>5,357,633</b>	<b>890,459</b>	<b>1.04%</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>85,806,368</b>	<b>89,560,117</b>	<b>3,753,748</b>	<b>4.37%</b>

TO: Members of the Board of Education  
 FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools  
 RE: Financial Report/Quarterly Budget Analysis  
 DATE: February 11, 2025

Below is the second quarter budget analysis of the Simsbury Public Schools for the fiscal year 2024-25.

### Revenues

Below is a summary of the District's State grant awards:

- **Open Choice Academic and Social Support** – Funding is used to promote academic and social success for students participating in the Hartford Region Choice program. Simsbury was awarded \$191,067 in the current fiscal year, a decrease of \$3,550 compared to the prior fiscal year.
- **Open Choice Attendance & Early Learning** - Funding is used to support salaries and benefits for 7 FTE certified staff, tutors, magnet school tuitions, additional Choice student supports, equipment and preschool development. Simsbury's projected current year entitlement, based on the district's 10/1/24 enrollment, is \$1,754,500, a decrease of \$116,001 compared to the prior fiscal year.
- **Special Education Placements & Excess Cost** – Funding is provided to reimburse the District for special education costs in excess of 4.5 times the cost of educating a regular education student. Simsbury's preliminary award is anticipated to be released in January. Simsbury's preliminary award is \$1,989,083, which is approximately \$410K less than anticipated.
- **Adult Education** – Funding to support Connecticut mandated adult education programs is administered through a cooperative program with the Farmington Continuing Education Department. Simsbury is projected to receive \$9,517 in the current fiscal year. The prior year award totaled \$7,863.
- **Talent Development (TEAM)** – Funding provides partial reimbursement for TEAM mentor stipends. The current year award has not yet been determined. The prior year award totaled \$2,858.
- **Private School Health Services** – Funding to support private school health services provided by the District's health services staff as required by Connecticut statute. The current year award is \$18,105, a decrease of \$2,333 compared to the prior fiscal year.

Below is a summary of the District's Federal grant awards:

- **Title I – Improving Basic Programs** – Funding is used to pay for tutor costs as well as instructional materials and equipment. Simsbury has received an award of \$127,821 in the current fiscal year, an increase of \$3,045 compared to the prior fiscal year.
- **Title II Part A – Teacher Quality** – Funding is used to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and provide professional development to teachers and principals. Simsbury has received an award of \$61,149 in the current fiscal year, an increase of \$1,730 compared to the prior fiscal year.
- **Title III Part A – English Language Acquisition** - Funding is used to assist students whose native language is other than English in order to obtain English proficiency and literacy. Simsbury has received an award of \$9,490 in the current fiscal year, a decrease of \$1,291 compared to the prior fiscal year.
- **Title IV, Part A – Student Support & Academic Enrichment** – Funding is used to (1) provide all students with access to a well-rounded education, (2) improve school conditions for student learning and (3) improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students. Simsbury has received an award of \$10,000 in the current fiscal year. No change from prior year funding.
- **IDEA – Part B and Pre-School** - Funding is used to support the education of identified students; salaries for teaching and support staff, professional development, outside consulting, tutoring services, instructional supplies and equipment, and technology licensing. Simsbury has received a final award of \$1,200,557 in the current fiscal year, an increase of \$24,475 compared to the prior fiscal year.

- **Carl Perkins** – Funding is used to develop the academic, career and technical skills of secondary students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs. Specific expenditures supported by the grant include substitute coverage for professional development, student transportation and equipment. The current year Perkins award is not, as yet, determined. The prior year award was \$37,262. Simsbury was awarded \$49,707 in the current fiscal year for the supplemental award, which is an increase of \$1,282 compared to the prior fiscal year.
- **Medicaid School Based Child Health Program** – Section 51 of PA17-2 mandates the district’s participation in the Medicaid School Based Child Health Program. Net reimbursements in the prior fiscal year totaled \$51,978.

**Expenditures**

<u>General Fund</u>	<u>2024-25</u>		<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25</u>	<u>2023-24</u>
	<u>Original Budget</u>	<u>YTD Expenditures</u>	<u>YTD Expenditures</u>	<u>% Spent</u>	<u>% Spent</u>
General Control	2,333,960	645,283	652,742	27.65%	26.63%
Instruction	52,937,354	6,256,065	5,709,092	11.82%	11.42%
Health Services	841,917	87,175	90,737	10.35%	12.22%
Pupil Transportation	3,450,946	648,633	489,389	18.80%	16.01%
Operation of Plant	5,752,074	1,272,542	1,149,669	22.12%	20.92%
Maint of Plant/Equipment	1,404,865	782,315	784,179	55.69%	56.32%
Insurance/Pension	15,055,015	1,884,341	1,927,762	12.52%	12.43%
Food Services	8,896	-	-	0.00%	0.00%
Student Body Activities	874,350	25,797	28,278	2.95%	3.40%
Community Services	32,563	7,771	3,652	23.87%	11.21%
Equipment-New/Replace	108,530	108,530	139,218	100.00%	100.00%
Out of District Tuition	2,417,174	277,624	526,431	11.49%	27.46%
<b>Total Public Budget</b>	<b>85,217,644</b>	<b>11,996,077</b>	<b>11,501,150</b>	<b>14.08%</b>	<b>14.10%</b>
<b>Non-Public Budget</b>	<b>588,724</b>	<b>99,187</b>	<b>89,274</b>	<b>16.85%</b>	<b>14.74%</b>
<b>Total Education Budget</b>	<b>85,806,368</b>	<b>12,095,264</b>	<b>11,590,425</b>	<b>14.10%</b>	<b>14.10%</b>

Instruction – The rate of spending is higher in the current year due to timing of payments for summer school pupil services and tuitions, special education supplies, curriculum supplies purchases and textbooks.

Pupil Transportation – The rate of spending is higher in the current year due to the timing of vendor payments to the transportation vendors.

Operation of Plant – The rate of spending is higher in the current year mainly due to an increase in electricity costs.

Community Services – The rate of spending is higher in the current year due to an increased amount of school building use. The District has seen a continued increased in building rentals since coming out of COVID.

Out of District Tuition – The rate of spending is higher in the current year due to the timing vendor and parent settlement payments. Prior year settlement contracts included payments to be made during the summer months as well as earlier payments to vendors.

**Enrollment Comparison 2024-25 to 2023-24**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Actual 10/1/2024</b>	<b>Actual 10/1/2023</b>	<b>Differential</b>
<b>K-6</b>	2145	2177	-32
<b>7-8</b>	687	634	+53
<b>9-12</b>	1229	1293	-64
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4061</b>	<b>4104</b>	<b>-43</b>

**Staffing Comparison (FTE)**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Certified</b>	393.05	392.29	+0.76
<b>Non-Certified</b>	261.86	255.61	+6.25
<b>Administrative</b>	<u>20.00</u>	<u>20.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>674.91</b>	<b>667.90</b>	<b>+7.01</b>

**Non-Lapsing Fund Summary**

<b>Non-Lapsing Fund Summary</b>	
Beginning Balance as of 6/30/24	297,608
FY24 Year End Transfer	551,160
FY25 Use of Non-Lapsing	(297,608)
Ending Balance as of 9/30/24	551,160