

January 31, 2025

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Simsbury School Staff:

Given the new presidential administration's hard stance on immigration enforcement, we have received a few inquiries from concerned citizens/employees about what would happen in the event of an action at one of our schools by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Simsbury Public Schools have always and will continue to operate in accordance with [state guidance](#) and all state and federal laws. Visitor and safety protocols have been shared with appropriate school staff. All resident students are allowed to attend school regardless of immigration status, and schools do not collect any information about such status. As always, our primary concern rests with the well-being and support of our students and staff.

We are now in full swing with our budget season, and while perhaps not the most entertaining of topics, it is certainly timely to provide an update as to where we stand in the budget development process. During a collaborative three board meeting in December, the Board of Finance led a discussion that included both Board of Education and Board of Selectmen members. During that meeting, discussions focused on the significant tax increases Simsbury residents have experienced over the course of the past two years and the need to align this year's tax increase with the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of 2.5 percent that senior citizens will receive in 2025.

At a recent Board of Finance meeting, more specific feedback was provided to the Board of Education regarding our operating budget. The Board of Education has been given a guideline of a 2.9 percent increase over last year's operating cost. This will certainly be a challenge as our fixed costs alone are above a 3.5 percent increase.

As we develop and present the budget over the next few weeks ([budget calendar](#)) we will be mindful of balancing the guidance the Board of Education has been provided with our identified educational needs.

The budget themes and priorities for the 2025-26 budget are included here and help to frame our budget planning and decision making as we move forward.

- Meet increased contractual obligations.
- Adjust for market increases in special education tuition and transportation.
- Create cost controls through the continued development of in-house specialized programming.
- Take into consideration steady district-wide student enrollment projections that should minimize the need for new staffing.

Visit our [Board of Education Budget webpage](#) for detailed presentations and the latest information.

As you may have heard, the district has been exploring properties for purchase in order to open an in-district, self contained, behavioral program to support special education students who require a more supported and smaller environment. Given the continued increasing complexity of needs of our special education students, as well as rising out-of-district tuition costs, the district is seeking a local solution. The property at 2 Farms Village Road would be an ideal location to house an in-district program focused on behavioral needs given its location, size, and layout. The location next to the high school allows for efficiencies in transportation (central in town, shared rides with secondary routes) and provision of meals. The property would allow for the program to eventually support up to 25 students with significant needs. With some manageable renovation, the building is set up well for 4-5 classrooms, multiple offices for individual clinical services or instruction, and required meeting spaces. A phased opening plan will allow us to ensure that new programming is sound and supportive to our students' needs while also ensuring responsible cost containment over time.

To date, my administrative team and I have had an opportunity to [present this program](#) concept to the Board of Education, the Board of Selectmen, and the Board of Finance. The next step in the formal approval process is a public hearing scheduled on February 18th @ 5:45 p.m. at town hall.

Please consider joining us for Simsbury High School's production of *Anastasia* – an inspiring “fairytale with a twist,” full of hope and inspiration about discovering who you are and defining who you're meant to be. *Anastasia* will be performed on Friday, January 31, Saturday, February 1, Friday, February 7, and Saturday, February 8 at 7:00PM. A 2:00 PM matinee will be performed on Sunday, February 2, and Sunday, February 9. Tickets for *Anastasia* will be available online only. Please visit the Simsbury High School website to purchase your tickets: www.simsbury.k12.ct.us/schools/shs.

I thank you for your support of our school system and the advocacy you continue to provide. As always, I hope you will contact me directly if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns.

Sincerely,

Matt Curtis
Superintendent of Schools