



Darien Board of Finance
Questions for the Board of Education
 2019-2020 proposed budget

Here are some general questions we have pertaining to the BOE budget and related topics. We recognize that many of them may have been fully or partially addressed in recent BOE meetings.

We are at your disposal in terms of how you like to respond to these questions. You can provide brief answers at our Tuesday, April 2 budget review meeting, you can submit answers in writing by email, which we will review at our public meeting, or you can refer us to the Vimeo recordings of relevant BOE discussions.

- 1) Could you expand on your latest enrollment forecast? We would be interested in your key assumptions, particularly regarding enrollment growth from coming developments.

In November 2018, Milone & MacBroom, Inc. provided a detailed analysis of trends in local demographics, employment, housing, births and enrollment in order to project future enrollments, both district wide and at the level of individual schools.

The following chart was used to project the impact of future developments:

Current Housing Multipliers						
Development Name	3-Year Average Enrollment	Total Units	Total Students Generated Per Unit	Students Grades K-5 Generated Per Unit	Students Grades 6-8 Generated Per Unit	Students Grades 9-12 Generated Per Unit
Avalon	94	189	0.47	0.22	0.07	0.18
The Heights at Darien	52	106	0.49	0.26	0.13	0.09
Total	148	295	0.48	0.24	0.09	0.15

Estimated Students Generated From Future Development					
Development Name	Total Units	Total Students Generated Per Unit	Students Grades K-5 Generated Per Unit	Students Grades 6-8 Generated Per Unit	Students Grades 9-12 Generated Per Unit
Palmer Family Development (Noroton Heights Shopping Center)	59	28	14	5	9
Corbin Block Redevelopment (Proposed)	116	56	28	11	17
Commons at Noroton Heights (Federal Realty)	122	58	29	11	18
Total (Approved)	181	86	43	16	27

2) Where are physical capacity limits in the schools at their most critical (e.g., classroom or other space)? What are the implications of these limits?

The average age of all of the facilities is 50 years old with the oldest building Holmes at 85 years old. Obviously, Darien High School and Tokeneke are in superior condition having been constructed within the past decade.

Four of the five elementary schools utilize modular classroom buildings to accommodate the existing educational program. These structures are detached, posing both weather and security challenges

Concerns with educational categories reviewed during the master planning process by KG&D.

- Removal of modular buildings
- Location of the early learning / ELP program
- Size/adequacy of educational spaces (classrooms undersized)
- General storage needs
- Common areas are barely large enough to accommodate existing school populations
 - Physical education was doubled up due to size a few years ago as gyms are only big enough for one class. Second class met at cafeteria or library.

Site logistic categories

- Traffic issues at drop off / pick up
- insufficient number number of parking spaces
- building security

3) Regarding the elementary school psychologists:

- a) What is the potential for additional expenditures (e.g., administrative support, state reporting requirements, etc.)? **None**
- b) Do you anticipate near/medium-term requests for even more staff of this nature (e.g., more psychologists, social workers)? **No**
- c) How did you determine the proposed compensation levels? Are they competitive for the talent you seek?

Compensation for the psychologists will be determined according to the Darien teachers' contract. We believe that our salary structure is competitive.

- d) What metrics are you planning to measure the success or effectiveness of these roles?
 - **Time spent with students and families in proactive and responsive support**
 - **Increased staff development in strategies to support students in social and emotional health**

4) Our understanding is that there have been BOE discussions about moving up some Priority 2 capital projects not included in your proposed budget. Can you elaborate?

As you are aware, the Legislature is currently considering a bill in which funding formulas for some school construction reimbursements may have a negative impact upon communities such as Darien. The Board recently reviewed all capital projects involving potential State funding to determine whether or not it is in the best interest of the community to expedite those projects by moving them up on the schedule. It was reconfirmed that we have appropriately planned out the timing for all State grants.

5) Can you summarize your calculations for the 2019-2020 ECR estimate?

The excess cost student based grant provides state support for special education placements. The initial threshold for which a student is eligible is referred to as the 'basic contribution'. This basic contribution is equal to the prior years Net Current Expenditures x 4.5. Costs associated with each student above the 4.5 X threshold are reimbursed at a projected 73% rate.

The 2018-19 basic contribution is $\$21,122 \times 4.5 = \$95,051$ (rounded)

\$ 65,000.00	Tuition		
\$ 35,000.00	Transportation		
\$ 100,000.00	Total		
\$ (95,051.00)	Subtract Threshold 4.5X		
\$ 4,949.00	Eligible for reimbursement		
73%			
\$ 3,612.77	Reimbursable through grant		

In 2019-20 we are projecting a decrease of six students. Our projected filing is estimated at \$3.90 million at a 73% reimbursement totaling \$2.85 million.

6) In terms of the Chromebook and iPad initiatives, has the replacement/upgrade cycle originally contemplated worked out?

Overall, yes, the replacement cycle has worked out. In the elementary and middle schools, students receive their chromebooks in 5th grade, and it stays with them until 8th grade. The chromebooks do last the entire 4 years. At the end of 8th grade, the chromebooks are turned in and retired, and a new ipad is issued to the student. This ipad will stay with the student for 4 years and will be turned in upon graduation. Our first round of ipads will be retired next year, and all signs point to the ipads serving the student well for all 4 years, thus resulting in a successful replacement cycle.

7) What is the thinking behind making department chair responsibilities a full-time role? Does this mean that these individuals will no longer have teaching roles? Will any outstanding teachers be lost to the students?

- **Greater supervision and evaluation of teachers/availability to coach teachers**
- **Department chairpersons will be able to support teachers to grow their capacity for all students**
- **Students who have department chairs as teachers, at times run into difficulties accessing their teachers due to their teachers' administrative responsibilities as department chairs.**

8) Regarding ELP:

a) Why is there a projected jump in ELP enrollment projected for 2022?

- **We are projecting class sizes ranging from 10-15 students**
- **Currently averaging between 98 -100 students prior to end of the fiscal year**

- **Birth to three information supports the increase in students**

b) What is your tuition plan for this program, both overall and in terms of program cost coverage?

- **The Board of Education reviews the tuition on an annual basis comparing other community pre schools in Darien. State of Connecticut requires that school districts provide an early learning program to students with an Individual Educational Plan at no expense to the family.**

9) Given the current emphasis on shared or consolidated services:

a) What are the administration's current or proposed efforts to reach out to other districts to explore these opportunities? Have any districts approached Darien?

We are always looking to explore ways to maximize efficiencies.

- **Connecticut Region Educational Consortium (CREC)**
- **State of Connecticut Purchasing Coalition**
- **ARUM and Associate - Cooperative Purchasing Agreement**
- **Continuing Education - Stamford**
- **Partnership with the YMCA for facilities**
- **Send children to various schools**
 - **CES**
 - **VoAg**
 - **Magnet Schools**
- **Fitch - Alternative High School - Offered to surrounding communities**

(b) Is there an opportunity to share or coordinate special education transportation with other districts (e.g., sharing buses that transport Darien and New Canaan students to the same location)?

Transportation has been shared in the past.

- Connecticut Educational Consortium (CES)**
- Previous transportation agreements w/ New Canaan, Wilton, Norwalk and Stamford.**

10)What union contracts will you be negotiating in 2019-20?

Custodians / Maintainers / Cafeteria contracts all expire on June 30, 2019. We have begun negotiations with those groups.

2020-21 - Teachers

2021-22 - Administrators