

Darien RTM Education Committee
Questions on Superintendent's 2019 – 2020 Proposed Budget
January 15, 2019/Revised April 1, 2019

General Comments:

[Budget Book](#)

What is best practice for budget book layout? Is our reporting consistent with others in our DRG? Committee would like more transparency so that programs are better understood. Some RC's such as MMS provide very detailed descriptions and others do not. For example: DHS provides only one explanation on page 21. We would like to see more consistency.

The budget book is intended to be both transparent and user friendly, it provides:

- Line item detail by Responsibility Center showing actual expenditures going back 3 years along with year to date budget expenditures, transfers and a proposed comparison with % and dollar value increases.
- White pages in the back of the book show grouped object detail along with staffing levels over a 5 year period.
- 5 year capital plan includes a rubric for prioritizing projects (high, medium, low) based on Code Compliance; Safety and Health; Instructional Need and Operational Efficiencies.

[RC - Summary \(p. 16\)](#)

Please provide information for comparison of actuals for 2015-16, 16-17, 17-18 (first 3 column to the left) vs. RTM approved budgets (at time of each respective approval) for each line item on this page.

[Enrollment](#)

Why not include a section on all K -12 students who live in Darien so that we see how many regular education and/ or special education students attend magnet schools, private or other public schools?

- We do not maintain records for students that are not placed within the Darien Public School System. Our enrollment forecast is used projecting the number of class sizes for appropriately planning placements.

Personnel (page 15)

Can the administration provide a split of the \$1.83 million increase requested for personnel into a.) Union contractual increases for existing personnel; b.) new 4.6 FTE hires and c.) other non union contractual increase, (discretionary bonus, etc.,) if any.

- White pages in the back of the book show grouped object detail along with staffing levels over a 5 year period.
 - For example - Secretaries Union Page 107; Paraprofessionals Union Page 108; Custodians Union Page 110; Maintenance Union Page 111.

RC 1: Darien High School

What is the voucher system and how does it work?

What prompts a teacher to cover another teacher's classes? Is it the teacher's choice or the administration's so that they do not have to hire a substitute? What is the impact of a teacher having to give up a planning period?

Has a school climate survey been done lately? How often is one done? Who completes the survey – students, teachers or both?

What are components of student activity funds – how much is supplies, how much is stipend?

Please provide narrative for requested \$555,000 budget increase. Page 21 only explains \$3,200 of your request. While we appreciate that some of the requested increase is contractual, we respectfully ask for line item explanations consistent with other RCs narratives.

- There is no voucher system in the teachers negotiated contract
- As a result of the last negotiated teacher contract, teachers receive \$30 per class that is covered.
- Focus groups were conducted at each school each spring. Schools created whole school/community goals related to school climate.
- Student activities are not in the operational account. Stipends are not paid out of the student activities account The reference under line 55 "Other Student

Activities" is for support for the China Exchange, new freshman orientation, guest speakers, school spirit events etc.

- DHS - Out of the total budget request of \$555,374 personnel increases represent \$551,047.
- School climate survey will be done during the 2019-20 school year.

Elementary School RC's:

Sub account in some elementary schools such as Holmes, Tokeneke is up.

What are components of student activity funds – how much is supplies, how much is stipend?

- Adjustments have been made to the 2018-19 substitute accounts. The substitute lines (page 104) show an overall increase of 1.12% when compared to the revised budget.
- At the elementary a wide variety of co-curricular and extracurricular activities for students. Co-curricular organizations are those which have a direct relationship to the curriculum such as a math club. Extracurricular organizations are important enrichment opportunities that are considered a valuable part of an education, such as a student council or a school play. Participation in school clubs and councils helps develop talents, interests, and abilities that students might not have as much opportunity to pursue in the regular academic program. These are all stipend related.
- Student activities are not part of the district budget and no stipends are paid out of them.

RC 11: Athletics

Committee is concerned that the "deep dive" was not as thorough as possibly needed. We are looking for more information on how much the district pays per sport and how much is from other sources such as Booster Club, DAF, individuals and parents. The 2018 – 2019 Budget grid included information on non district funds.

Committee questioned number of players on each team versus number of coaches, dollars spent per sport, cut policy.

Is there an equitable distribution of funds for equipment? How do you ensure this?

What is the communication process and decision making process when new or replacement equipment is needed after the season begins?

What is the relationship between the Board of Education and DAF? Does the district apply to DAF for grants or does DAF suggest projects to the district?

We should have an overall strategy in place to cover costs (such as ice hockey).

Is it the Board's goal to have equity in what parents pay for athletics? What are parents paying out of pocket for each sport?

The following chart was prepared and reviewed by the Board of Education:

https://www.darienps.org/uploaded/content/district/departments/finance/budget/2019-20_Budget_Documents/rc_11_handouts.pdf

**2019-2020 Budget Worksheet
DARWIN HIGHWAY SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC EXPENSE PER CATEGORY**

| Sport / Category | 2018-2019 | | | 2019-2020 | | | 2019-2020 | | 2019-2020 | | 2019-2020 | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|-------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Men | Women | Other | Men | Women | Other | Men | Women | Other | Men | Women | Other |
| Aerobic/Conditioning | 43 | 4 | 3 | \$11,807 | \$1,850.00 | \$1,700.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Baseball | 20 | 4 | 0 | \$15,807 | \$18,116.00 | \$1,700.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Baseball (girls) | 27 | 3 | 0 | \$15,807 | \$18,116.00 | \$1,700.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Choreography | 8 | 1 | 1 | \$7,156 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,400 | \$0 | \$1,400 | \$1,400 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Cross Country (Boys) | 97 | 2 | 0 | \$6,470 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Cross Country (girls) | 119 | 3 | 1 | \$6,470 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| FTSAC | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Field Hockey | 28 | 4 | 0 | \$11,000 | \$1,000.00 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Physical Center | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Football | 132 | 18 | 4 | \$11,100 | \$22,000.00 | \$10,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Golf (Boys) | 18 | 2 | 0 | \$7,156 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Golf (girls) | 18 | 2 | 0 | \$7,156 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Gymnastics | 18 | 2 | 0 | \$7,156 | \$1,671.76 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Ice Hockey (Boys) | 38 | 3 | 1 | \$11,000 | \$18,431.34 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$10,000 | \$11,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Ice Hockey (girls) | 28 | 2 | 0 | \$11,100 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Indoor Track (B) | 58 | 3 | 0 | \$6,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Indoor Track (G) | 40 | 3 | 2 | \$6,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Lacrosse (Boys) | 69 | 7 | 1 | \$11,100 | \$1,700.00 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Lacrosse (girls) | 49 | 9 | 0 | \$11,100 | \$1,700.00 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Badminton | 11 | 2 | 0 | \$4,200 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Netball | 14 | 2 | 1 | \$4,200 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Rolling | 29 | 2 | 0 | \$4,200 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Swimming | 99 | 4 | 1 | \$11,100 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Swimming (girls) | 74 | 4 | 0 | \$11,100 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Tennis | 13 | 3 | 0 | \$18,741 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,175.00 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Track | 34 | 3 | 0 | \$4,200 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Track/Field (B) | 21 | 2 | 0 | \$3,600 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,100.00 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Track/Field (G) | 34 | 2 | 0 | \$3,600 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,100.00 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$1,100 | \$1,100 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Volleyball (Boys) | 2 | 1 | 0 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Volleyball (girls) | 4 | 1 | 0 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Weightlifting | 24 | 2 | 0 | \$9,411 | \$0 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Wrestling | 34 | 2 | 0 | \$6,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Track/Field (B) | 212 | 4 | 1 | \$8,701 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Volleyball (Boys) | 18 | 1 | 0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Volleyball (girls) | 29 | 4 | 1 | \$18,741 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Wrestling | 18 | 3 | 1 | \$6,000 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Recreational | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Outdoor Sports | 24 | 3 | 0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Totals | | | | \$291,368 | \$187,499 | \$171,179 | \$18,718 | \$18,918 | \$18,918 | \$18,918 | \$18,918 | \$0 |

Participating students are listed in (B) (1) column (B) (2) column (C) (1) column (C) (2) column

| Sport | BOE Contribute | Parent Contribute | Total | % Paid-BOE | % Paid-Parents | Price per Participant |
|----------|----------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Hockey D | \$8,500 | \$21,275 | \$29,775 | 28.53% | 71.47% | \$801 |
| Hockey B | 10,500 | \$35,000 | \$45,500 | 23% | 77% | \$11,380 |
| Skating | \$4,000 | \$18,200 | \$22,200 | 18% | 82% | \$284 |
| Squash | \$14,000 | \$11,200 | \$25,200 | 56% | 44% | \$300 |
| Skating | | | TBD | | | \$275* |
| Total | \$40,000 | \$85,675 | \$125,675 | | | |

* Skating charges a yearly participant fee to build up a reserve to their student activity account so that they may purchase new boots every 7-8 years.

RC 12: Maintenance

How can parents learn more about security measures in place at the district schools?

- For the protection of our students and staff, we can not publicly release specific information regarding our security plan. The State of Connecticut requires Darien Board of Education to file and update "All hazards safety and school security plan" on a yearly basis.
- Each school files a plan separately and are required to establish a committee. These committees meet the requirements of Public Act No. 13-3, and include the following members:
 1. Local police officer;
 2. Local first responder (fire or emergency medical services);
 3. Teacher at school;
 4. Administrator at school;
 5. Mental health professional;
 6. Parent or guardian;
- Each committee reviews and debriefs after each exercise.
- The plan is signed off by all emergency personnel (police, fire, EMS), First Selectman, Health Director as well as school staff and central office.
- Significant investments have been made to our schools, including:
 - Investments with cameras and recently the Board has authorized the superintendent to enter into a MOU with the Police Department for access to cameras.
 - implemented a blue light system for lockdowns which automates and

lockdown the school utilizing technology.

**If anyone has a concern, they should contact the Principal of the School.

RC 15: Technology

What are the annual maintenance costs for the Ipads for the High School? What are the replacement costs?

- There are no annual maintenance costs associated with the IPAD.
- Cost of the IPAD is \$450

RC 16: Administration

What is the procedure for citizen requests to see the FOI Log?

- Email to the Superintendent of Schools.

RC 19: Curriculum

Between Curriculum and (RC 19) and Curriculum Supervision (page 100) there are 33 employees in total (including an Assistant Superintendent and two program coordinators in addition to 16 FTEs at respective schools) with a \$5 million annual budget which is up from \$3.8 million in 2015 – 2016 school year , a 31 % increase over four years. How many of these employees are actually student facing? Has the Board of Education ever considered ever considered cooperating on curriculum development or any other functions with neighboring districts in order to reverse these cost increases? Do we need 33 employees creating and supervising curriculum for seven schools?

- RC 19 includes: 2 elementary program directors, the Assistant Superintendent of Schools and 12.75 Instructional Support Specialists. These staff members are direct service providers for children in support for SRBI, as well as coaching/support for our classroom teachers.
- Page 100 of the budget under Curriculum Supervision includes: Department Chairpersons at the High and Middle Schools; Athletic Director and Assistant; Music Coordinator; Instructional Support Technologist; Special Education 1.6 Department Chairperson Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Special Education and 2 Assistant

Directors. These staff members do include direct service to students (special education), as well as support of families and participation in the IEP/PPT process.

*It is important to note that there are not 33 employees overseeing Curriculum and Instruction.

RC 20: Finance

What would the costs be for open.gov? Why is the Board of Education not using this?

- The Board has indicated that they will be reviewing this during their goals/objectives discussions.
- We believe our current budget book and financial reports are transparent.

RC 23: Summer School

Do parents have to pay to register a child for classes to raise a grade or remove a failed grade?

- For credit classes have a fee associated with them.

RC 24: Special Education

The overarching question is how can the District be more proactive in building programs to meet the needs of children within the District?

We continue to assess the educational needs of our students ELP-12+, which determines the current programming and future program development. Most recent programs include the development of new elementary DLC classrooms, the restructuring of the AIM program at MMS, the comprehensive class structure at DHS, and our partnership with DHS to design Fitch Academy.

What is driving the outplacement costs of nearly \$7 million for outplacement and how has this changed over the past few years?

By federal and state regulation, the Darien Public Schools' special education Planning and Placement Teams (PPTs) place students' in the least restrictive environment (LRE). When students' cannot receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) within the Darien Public Schools, PPTs must consider an appropriate placement for the

student to ensure FAPE. Outplacement costs are based on student needs, which often require intensive programming (e.g., day treatment and residential therapeutic settings).

What is the outplacement cost per child over time? Is there an ongoing analysis of the special needs of the students who are out placed?

The cost of an out-of-district program is dependent on the needs of the student, and includes costs associated with tuition, related services, transportation, and any consultative services required. The cost per child varies significantly based on the recommended program. The mean or average per student expenditure is not an accurate method to analyze trends in outplacement costs.

We continue to study state and local trends regarding outplacements. In addition, we continue to analyze the needs of the students both in-district and out-of-district in considering the development of new programs.

Are there patterns of need the District is not meeting?

As we stated above, we continue to assess the needs of our students ELP-12+, which determines the current programming and future program development to address their educational needs.

Could new District wide programs be formed to address the needs of the students who are currently outpaced? Would improved in district services for students with learning disabilities / dyslexia result in fewer outplacements?

As we stated above, we continue to assess the needs of our students ELP-12+, which determines the current programming and future program development to address their educational needs.

Over the past three years, we have implemented scientifically, research-based multisensory reading instruction in general education and special education to address the needs of students with reading disabilities.

Could unique programs be formed with nearby districts (such as Fitch accepting out of district students?)

We continue to explore partnerships with neighboring districts for the purpose of developing programs to address student needs.

What is tuition in public and private schools that students from Darien attend?

As we stated above, the cost per child varies significantly based on the recommended program. The mean or average per student expenditure is not an accurate method to analyze trends in outplacement costs.

Other districts provide specific information on schools attended by out placed students. Would Darien provide this?

At the November 27, 2018 Board of Education meeting, we provided several schools recommended by PPTs for students in Darien. Consistent with our commitment to student and family confidentiality, we do not provide numerical student data regarding school placement.

https://www.darienps.org/uploaded/content/district/board_of_ed/agendas_and_minutes/2018-19/materials/boe_presentation11272018_2018-19_Report_to_BOE_Final.pdf

When parents unilaterally out place a child, does District financial support imply that the District agrees that the child's needs cannot be met within the District?

Darien Public Schools complies with the Connecticut State Department of Education's Conflict Resolution Process. This regulatory process provides the District and families the right to engage in Due Process Hearings and Mediations when disagreement exists regarding a child's program. In each of these cases, the District at no time believes it could not provide the child an appropriate program.

Is it necessary to have six special education secretaries?

At this time, we believe the staffing of special education secretaries is appropriate. The roles and responsibilities of each secretary varies and may include accounting, specialized transportation, compliance with IEP-related deadlines, state reporting, PPT meeting scheduling, and IDEA 611/619 and excess cost grant monitoring.

RC 25: Fixed Expenses

Transportation costs are not clear.

- RC 25 Line 888 are the costs associated with transporting regular education children to and from school.
- We utilize the following:
- 24- Type I Passenger Buses (70-72 Capacity)
- Transportation for special education students can be found at RC 24 Line 863 and 864 which is further detailed by in and out of district transportation.

General / Suggestions

What does the Board of Education plan to do to promote shared services with other districts?

As discussed at our meeting with the Board of Finance on Tuesday, April 2, 2019, 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

Transportation has been shared in the past.

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

Would the Board consider asking the administration for a priority list of items that were not included in the budget, similar to the priority list that is used for capital?

Might the Board collaborate with the Darien Library to keep some Approved Budget books on reserve there for RTM Education Committee and possibly F and B members rather than printing and distributing these books to every person on these committees?

- If anyone does not want to receive a copy of the budget they should let us know and we will remove their name from the printing of the budget. All budget materials are currently posted on our website at www.darienps.org.