

**Essex Elementary School Board of Education
2023-2024 Budget Workshop Frequently Asked Questions**

Regarding Projected Student Enrollment and Class Sizes

Q: Should we discuss projected class sizes for 2023-2024?

A: Staffing recommendations made to the Board by the Administration are based on the class size guidelines set forth in the Board policy. When we evaluate class sizes in line with our size guidelines, we also need to look at the needs for a cohort for students. Potential recommendations over staffing levels would start with a conversation with the principal and the impact on their staff. Largely, the educational profile for the students we have dictates the need for staffing at each grade level. Ultimately, the Board's support for the staffing level in their building, and ultimately class size, is a balance of values and what is possible budgetarily.

Q: The budget uses October 1 enrollment numbers; what is the current enrollment?

A: The enrollment currently in the school (as of the budget workshop dates in the winter) is very similar to the October 1 enrollment. Because actual enrollment may vary over the course of the school year, the administration monitors these numbers carefully. If at any point during the budgeting process there is a need to rethink budgeted staffing in the upcoming school year, the Administration would advise the Board accordingly.

Q: Do the enrollment numbers include PreK?

A: No, just the K-6 enrollment currently in the building.

Regarding Changes in the Substitute Salary Line and the Request for Daily Building Sub

Q: Please explain the reallocation of Substitute Pay from Supervision District to the Essex budget for 23-24?

A: The funds that were in the Supervision District budget, for use by the Elementary schools, are being removed from Supervision and placed directly in each local board's budget. The net impact on the bottom line in the current year is \$0. This practice will ensure more accurate budgeting based on usage for each elementary school moving forward in subsequent years.

Q: Are sub pay rates changing for next year?

A: We are evaluating substitute pay rates for each employee group throughout the spring. In regards to our Teaching Subs, we are currently proposing an increase in the daily rate from \$100 / \$125* per day to \$125 / \$150* per day to ensure we are above minimum wage and competitive with our neighboring school districts.

* Higher pay rate for substitutes with Teacher Certification

Q: Please share more information on the proposed long-term daily building sub for Essex

A: Key information on this proposed position is below:

- Ensure fewer disruptions to building due to lack of available daily substitutes
- Would receive 1.0 FTE (proposed in 2023-24 budgets for all towns)
- \$45,000 estimated annual salary per person; benchmarked on Teacher's contract
- 35 hours / week (in line with the school day)
- No benefits; Unaffiliated
- Fewer instances of Paraprofessionals providing substitute coverage in lieu of their primary responsibilities

Q: Was the current building sub funded through COVID money?

A: Yes, we have been using ESSER grants since 2020 for this resource in all schools

Q: What do we expect will happen to substitute costs with the addition of a long term daily building substitute?

A: This would remain to be seen. Short term daily sub needs may decrease over time, but since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been significant difficulty in securing daily subs and an increase in staff absences. We did extensive research into absences during our budget development process. The number of unfilled vacancies based on data over the past three years is far greater than a single building sub could fill, and therefore, we would still need to fund additional subs in the future.

Q: Have we looked into getting Interns / Subs from local colleges and universities?

A: We will look into this and see if it's an option that would benefit our schools.

Q: Has staff absenteeism always been an issue or has this been because of COVID?

A: Prior to COVID, our district, like many others, was challenged by the lack of available substitute teachers. We have seen an increase in staff absences since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, due in part to health concerns and quarantine requirements. Although we are no longer in the pandemic, our rate of staff absences continues to be high.

Q: At some point, would you look at having a second long term building sub? Would you consider a Para building based substitute as well?

A: Yes, this could be a conversation for future budgets based on attendance trends for certified and non-certified staff in subsequent years.

General Budget Questions

Q: Where do the ESSER Funds and other grants fall into the budget requests?

A: Grants are not included in the budget requests; these budgets are entirely separate

Q: Is Essex the only building that uses Natural Gas?

A: No. Deep River uses Natural Gas and Central Office is propane.